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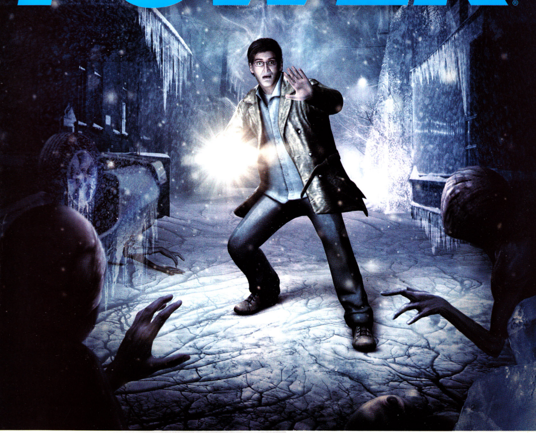

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories • G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra • Punch-Out!! • Let's Tap Rabbids Go Home • Klonoa • Ghostbusters

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MAY 2009

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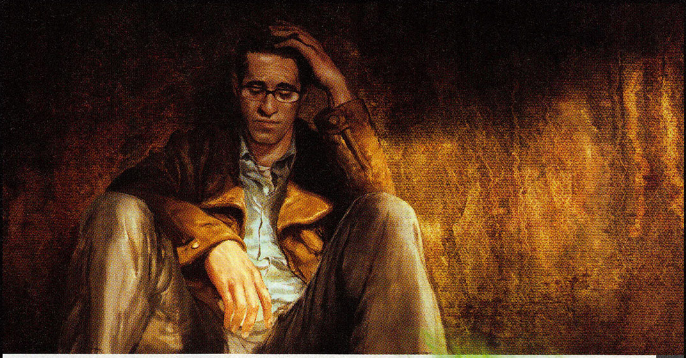
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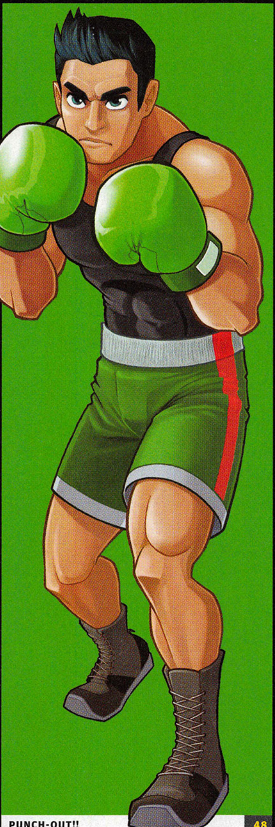
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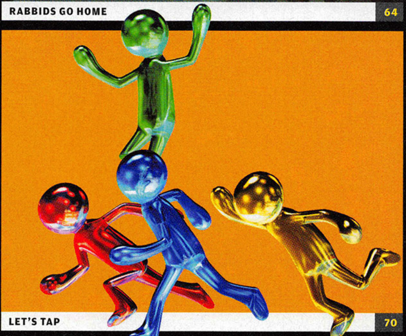
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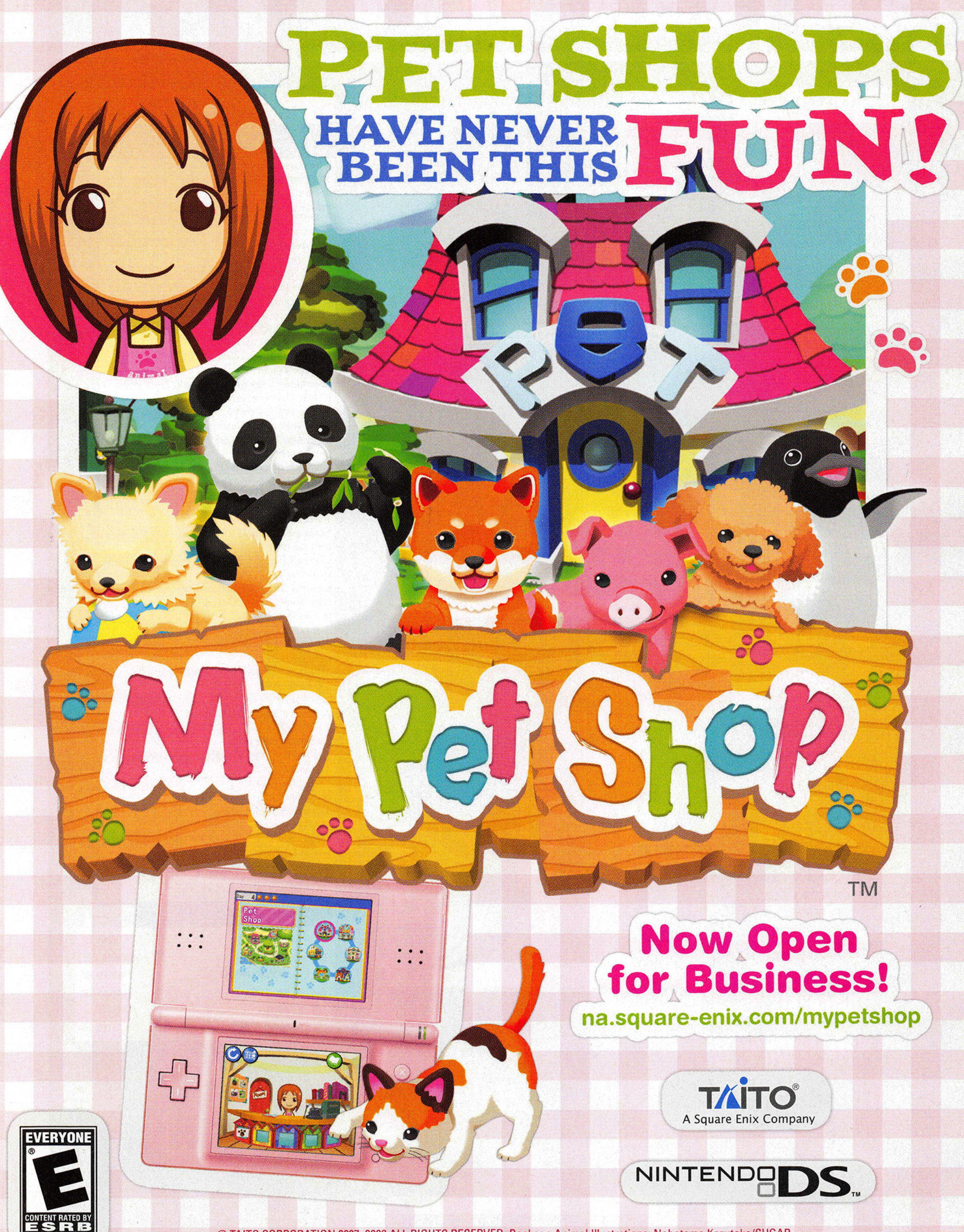
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VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare
DW = Nintendo DSiWare

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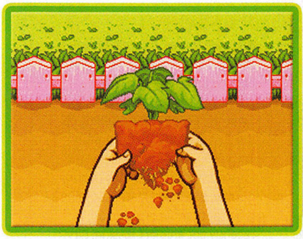

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Pulse

Two for Two

Chris Slate

Nintendo's first new Wii games of 2009 got the year off to a fantastic start. If April's Excitebots: Trick Racing and May's Punch-Out!! are an indication of what we've got to look forward to, Wii owners are in for a banner year. While you could argue that those two titles aren't quite in the same league as last year's March/April combo of Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario Kart Wii, it's exciting to get two great games without having yet dipped into one of Nintendo's very top franchises. Who knows what surprises may still be in store this year?

For now, though, I'm having an absolute blast racing my Bot and punching Glass Joe in the face. These sequels really deliver the goods, and have maxed out my Nintendo-fanboy meter. Between these new Wii classics and Rhythm Heaven for the Nintendo DS, I haven't had this much fun since...well, Super Smash Bros. Brawl and Mario Kart Wii.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

Wii
FIRST LOOK AT THE CRAZY-COOL SEQUEL TO EXCITE TRUCK!
EXCITEBOTS TRICK RACING
NINTENDO POWER
A BOY AND HIS BLOB
RHYTHM HEAVEN
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POKÉMON PLATINUM VERSION
REVEALED: The 10 best new features of the biggest Pokémon adventure ever!

V241 APRIL 2009

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters between rounds with King Hippo. But first, this month's special letter request: Now that the Punch-Out!! series has returned, what other game franchise would you love to see make a comeback, and why? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

LITTLE THINGS MATTER

In your next awards special, I'd like to see two new categories added: Best Logo and Best Instruction Booklet. Both have gone unrecognized for too long! **—ALT**

Too true! There's something really satisfying about cracking open a game case to find a thick, well-designed, colorful manual. I'm also a fan of quality printing on game discs, beautiful box art, and the rare game case that includes an alternate image printed on the inside of the sleeve. Little details like those help a game feel like a quality experience. We'll definitely take your suggestions under consideration for next year's awards, Alt.

STUDENT GAMER

Nintendo should make a driving simulator for Wii that uses realistic, interactive environments to teach kids the basics of driving, to prepare them for using a car in the real world. Does this sound like a good idea? **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

Definitely! In fact, back when I was preparing to get my driver's license, I remember thinking that I could have learned the rules of the road much faster from a game than by just reading a book. Practicing parallel parking probably wouldn't make for a thrilling experience, but the interactivity of Wii could turn a driver's-ed game into a great learning tool.

FLU SEASON

Nintendo Power is a great magazine that keeps me well informed, but I recently noticed a little flu starting to spread: a *nostalgia* flu. Come on, people! Stop dwelling on the past and get with the times! The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess is way better than Ocarina of Time, and Super Mario Sunshine is better than Super Mario 64. I recently got Animal Crossing: City Folk, and it's 20 times better than the first one! So why are we still wrapped up in the past? Let's give some credit to the newer games. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

I'll leave this for others to debate, but might I point out that 99.99% of each issue is devoted to awesome new games? Just thought I'd put that out there.

HUFF...HUFF...HUFF

I was playing the activity in Wii Fit where you carry the Wii Remote in your pocket while you run, and I had an idea: what if adventure games could incorporate this feature? When you need to perform other actions, you could simply use a second Wii Remote. This approach would let you really *be* the character, all while getting a good workout. **—NICK**

Are you trying to kill me, Nick? Adventure games are my favorite type, and I doubt I could run half a lap around Twilight Princess's Ordon Village! Your idea might work for short stretches, but I'd hate to have to put my quest on hold for a shower and a nap.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

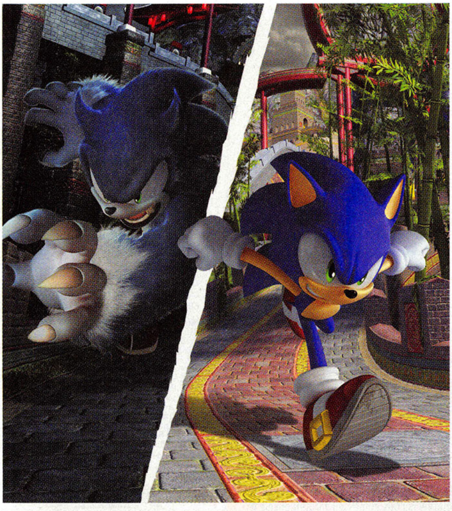
Bowling pins, field goals, pie-throwing, and robotic bugs—Monster Games lets its checkered freak flag fly with its sequel to Excite Truck, Excitebots: Trick Racing.

I just went to nintendopower.com and saw the preview pages of Vol. 240's Excitebots feature, and WOW—that game looks *insane*! Everybody online is going crazy for it, and as a huge fan of Excite Truck, I can't blame 'em. EXCIIITE!! —**TREV K.**

We've seen those same online message boards, Trev; that's got to be the biggest reaction we've seen to a Nintendo title so far this year! And having beaten the game, we can tell you that it deserves every bit of hype it gets—Excitebots is awesome!

A FIERCE FAN

I love the Zelda games, but it's time for the series to take a new direction, especially in the plot department—I wouldn't be very interested in another story about Link's rise from quiet villager to epic hero. The trick would be to find a story that's fresh enough to serve as a satisfying diversion from the rest of the series, while not feeling so different that it doesn't meet gamers' expectations. In my humble opinion, a prequel starring the real Fierce Deity would more than suffice. In Majora's Mask, he was a freaking awesome fighter whose spirit was put into a mask that made Link even more awesome than he was before. Controlling this guy would be incredible, and there is so much room for an amazing story because we don't know his background. And once his game came out, Nintendo would have a strong reason to put him in the next Smash Bros.! —**SIR LOGICALOT**



Should classic characters evolve, stay the same, or all become werewolves?

TWINKLE TWINKLE

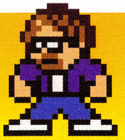
I'm so happy that we're finally getting a Starfy game! I've been curious about the series since I first heard about Densetsu no Starfy last year in Nintendo Power. I am 100% looking forward to getting this game, along with another great upcoming DS title, Mario & Luigi RPG 3! —**MAGGIE**

I agree—it's about time the little star swam over to our shores! In fact, we've got a little Starfy info for you in News this month, so be sure to check it out.

HOWLING MAD

What is with the werewolves? First Link turned into one, and now Sonic does, too?! Who's next, Mario, Kirby, Samus, or Yoshi? Developers should stay away from the werewolf idea and try to keep characters the same as they were in the old days, when they were cooler. Like, Wario used to be Mario's evil doppelgänger, but now he's just a farting guy on a motorcycle. —**OAKLEY980**

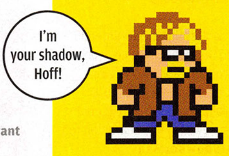
Link turns into a regular wolf in Twilight Princess—not a werewolf—so your assertion that we're in the midst of some kind of werewolf movement doesn't hold up. But to your larger point, I'd argue that some characters have changed for the better over time; it comes down to how well each character is handled. And if farting while riding a motorcycle is wrong, I don't want to be right.

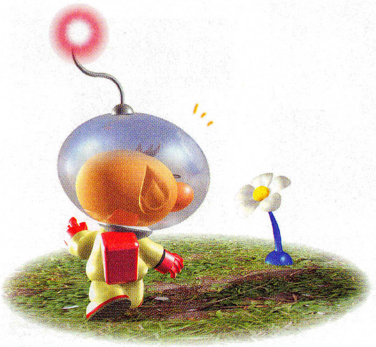


DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I was reading a book that lists video game world records when I discovered that a Chris Hoffman had the number-one score in the world for Defender! Could this be the same Chris Hoffman that we all know and love? I'm surprised that he doesn't have the top score for Mega Man. —**THE DENINATOR (DENIN)**

Sorry, Denin, but that is not my score on Defender. If I had to guess, I'd say that was my evil clone, Liquid Hoff. We're identical except that he's blond, speaks with a British accent, and always wears a trench coat with no shirt underneath. We haven't talked for a while, mostly due to his poor fashion sense. He's always trying to ruin my credit score and I suspect he's the reason I don't have much luck with the ladies.


I'm your shadow, Hoff!



At E3, I would love to see Pikmin 3 unveiled. The developers could create a whole new world and add much more to the gameplay. After the release of New Play Control! Pikmin, it seems like Nintendo is gearing up for a new game. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

WHAT'S THE COOLEST THING THAT NINTENDO COULD REVEAL AT E3?

The obvious answer is information on a new Zelda game, one that's built from the ground up for Wii. I am a die-hard fan of the series and thought Twilight Princess was awesome, so I'm definitely hoping for a cool new addition to the franchise. **—(NO NAME GIVEN)**

One thing I'd like to see at E3 is an RPG starring Miis! Imagine this: the game starts and it tells you to pick the characters that you want to use. So, if there's a box labeled Bad Guy, you'd click on it and then pick the Mii character that you'd want to be the bad guy. Then you would pick the good guy and other characters. When the game starts, you see all of the Mii characters that you love. C'mon, Chris—you know that would be awesome! If that happens at E3, I'll go nuts! **—HILVERSUM**

At E3, I would love to see remakes of a bunch of Nintendo 64 games announced for the Nintendo DS, including titles like Super Smash Bros. and Yoshi's Story. I would buy every single game in the series! **—FROGGY1**

The coolest thing that Nintendo could reveal at E3 would be a new Metroid title for DS. I've been waiting *sooo* long for a 2.5-D Metroid, and maybe they could add a new playable character, too. **—RAINBOWBOWSER**

The most awesome thing Nintendo could reveal at E3 would be a new console! I really love my Wii and DS (got 'em both almost as soon as they came out), but now that both systems are a few years old, I can't help but wonder what Nintendo will come up with next. There's already touch control and motion control—what other cool new innovations might we see? Games controlled by your vision? Or brainwaves? Imagine making Mario jump just by thinking about it, or aiming your Arwing by simply looking at where you want to shoot! Ooh, I'm already jittery with anticipation! **—LYEXK**

The coolest thing that could be revealed at E3 would be a Legend of Zelda RPG. Sega made a DS RPG with Sonic, and Nintendo put Mario into an RPG back on the Super NES, and those titles were both huge hits! Imagine a turn-based or active-battle combat system where Link, a Zora, a Goron, and a Deku fight together to take down Ganon, Vaati, or an all-new villain—wouldn't that be exciting? **—THEHEROINGREEN**

For me, the most exciting thing that could be revealed at E3 would be a Kingdom Hearts game for Wii. When you think about it, that series is more suited to the Nintendo fan base. I think Square Enix should get together with the developers of Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn to make a strategy-type Kingdom Hearts where you would control Sora, Donald, Goofy, Riku, etc. on a grid-based map. When you attack an enemy the game would become an on-rails fighter in which you use the Wii Remote to swing the Keyblade or use spells. **—ROXASTHEMIGHTY**

The most exciting thing that could possibly happen is an all-new Smash Bros., especially if it's for the Nintendo DSi. Just think of how awesome it would be to take the fight with you wherever you want! And with an SD card, you could transport custom stages from Super Smash Bros. Brawl to the DSi (or vice versa)! **—BRAWLFAN**

While some of your ideas seem more likely than others, I'd be up for all of them. Now I'm *really* excited about June's big show!

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Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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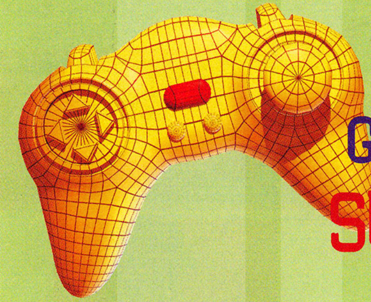

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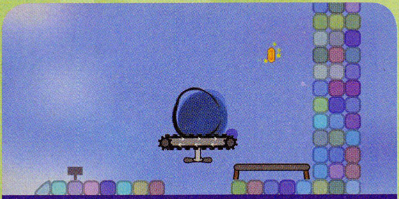

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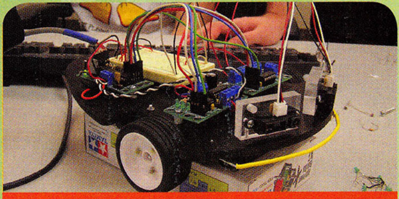

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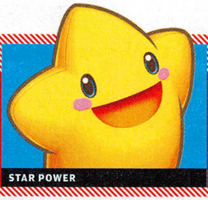

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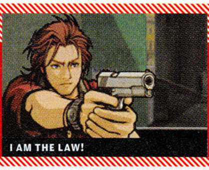

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Return to the Links

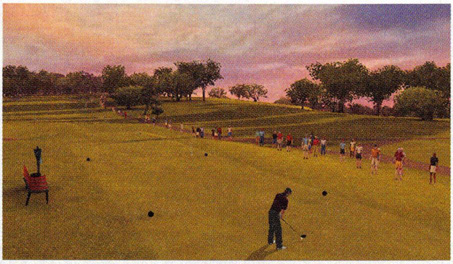
The best golfer in the world gets back into the swing of things with Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10.

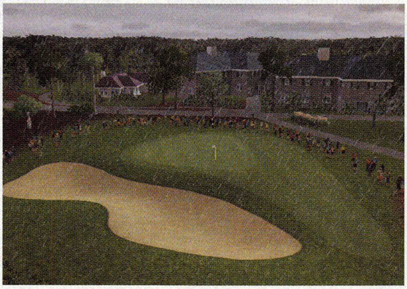
Like the man himself, Tiger Woods PGA Tour is back and better than ever. After a shaky start on Wii, the franchise has improved its game every year. Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 is one of the first titles to support the Wii MotionPlus accessory, which will help the Wii Remote translate your movements more precisely. That means when you take a hack with the controller, your horrific, sand-trap-finding swing will be reflected perfectly onscreen. (Don't sweat, duffers; the difficulty can be tweaked to be more forgiving in a number of ways.) Subtleties such as a slight twist of the wrist at contact will put a draw or fade on your shot. You also have a lot more control over the power behind your shot, with the expected consequences—put too much oomph into your swing, and the ball probably won't go where you intended.

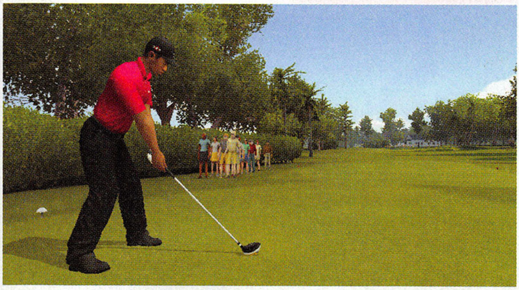
You might expect that the new swing feedback will instantly shave strokes off your game. Not so fast: PGA Tour 10 takes weather effects to the next level with a dynamic system that matches the actual weather of the course's location. For example, if you choose to play the Bethpage course (the location of this year's U.S. Open and one of the spotlighted new courses in the game), Wii will go online and grab the weather from Long Island, NY, then adjust your game accordingly. Not only is the technology cool; it provides constantly changing course conditions to ratchet up the difficulty. In addition, the developers have sought to capture the pressure of playing when each putt is on the line. Distractions like louder crowds and cheers on the next hole over will affect you the same way they affect the pros on a Sunday afternoon. And you won't be the only player on the course—if you peek at the next fairway you'll see your opponent dropping a fairway shot within six feet of the pin. And if that's not enough of a challenge, you can turn off all the shot meters and play purely by feel.

PGA Tour 10 changes up its broadcasting crew from the previous years. ESPN's Scott Van Pelt and the Golf Channel's Kelly Tilghman are the new hosts; if we could have picked anyone to fill David Feherty's shoes, we'd have gone with Van Pelt in an instant. We'll bring you more information about Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10 as the game gets closer to its tee time.

—CHRIS SH.







Party Like It's 1404

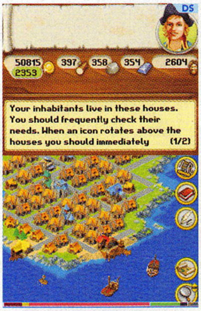
Ubisoft's **Dawn of Discovery** brings the popular Anno historical-simulation series to Wii and DS.

It's the year 1404, and your nameless European nation is beset by catastrophic droughts and famines. Desperate for a solution, the king has tasked you with exploring the far reaches of the Orient to establish new colonies, open up trade routes, and bring new technologies back to your homeland.

Dawn of Discovery is the newest chapter in the long-running PC-based Anno series, which is huge in Europe and has won a cult of ardent fans in North America. A "god game" along the lines of Civilization or Age of Empires, the Anno series focuses more on commerce and exploration than warfare, as players must settle new frontiers, cultivate technologies, and open trade routes to bring their citizens the resources they need.

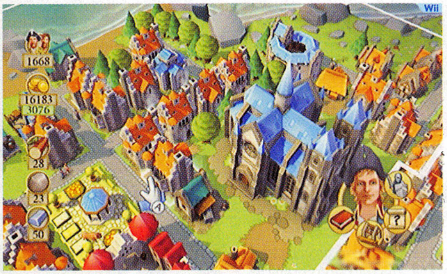
The Wii version is a completely original take on the franchise, with a brighter visual style, two-player co-op, and a new control scheme that puts the Wii Remote to good use. The DS version has a more serious look and borrows the well-regarded stylus control scheme of Anno 1701 (which was released for DS last March). Both versions are scheduled for a summer release.

—CASEY L.



Your inhabitants live in these houses. You should frequently check their needs. When an icon rotates above the houses you should immediately (1/2)

From the looks of it, this kingdom has yet to discover a new color of roofing.

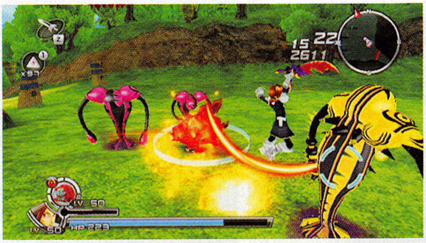


Hatching Heroes

Wii-exclusive **Spectrobes: Origins** ponders the question of which came first: the fossil or the egg?

Most longstanding fictional series eventually get around to an origin story. The first pair of Spectrobes titles dropped you straight into the world of test-tube monsters fighting alongside planetary patrol officers for the betterment of humankind. As the franchise jumps from DS to Wii, however, the story rewinds (via flashbacks) to reveal secrets about the Spectrobes universe. Though Disney Interactive has not yet offered story details, those flashbacks presumably explain where the Spectrobes came from and how they ended up as fossilized remains. The move from handheld to console allows new developer Genki to utilize Wii's motion-based controls as you excavate fossils in large-scale 3-D environments, use Spectrobe DNA to breed new creatures, and engage in real-time battles versus the Krawl or whatever threat officers Rallen and Jenna face. Battle mechanics in the DS titles were somewhat limited, but Wii may offer more direct control over fighting techniques. More details will likely surface as the game's fall release approaches.

—GEORGE S.



Blue Skies for Sakurai

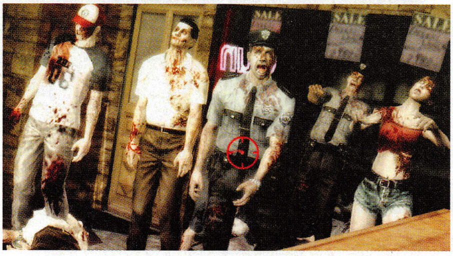
The father of Kirby and Super Smash Bros. is back at work, crafting a game "unlike anything you've ever experienced before."

Masahiro Sakurai had a storied career at HAL Laboratory: he designed the Kirby character at age 19, and then created the wildly successful Super Smash Bros. series and directed its first two installments. Sakurai left HAL in 2003 to start his own company, Sora Ltd., with the goal of creating original titles. Nintendo President Satoru Iwata—who worked alongside Sakurai at HAL—asked him back to helm Super Smash Bros. Brawl, but that team was disbanded after the game's record-breaking release, leaving Sakurai's future unclear.

Now Sakurai has emerged again, announcing Project Sora (Japanese for "sky"), a new studio co-owned by Nintendo and Sakurai's own company. Project Sora is developing a new game that Sakurai promises is a wholly original experience that has nothing to do with Super Smash Bros. Don't expect details about the forthcoming title anytime soon, though; the development team has only just been formed, so the game probably won't be far enough along to show (let alone release) for at least a year or two. We'll be sure to keep you updated. —CASEY L.

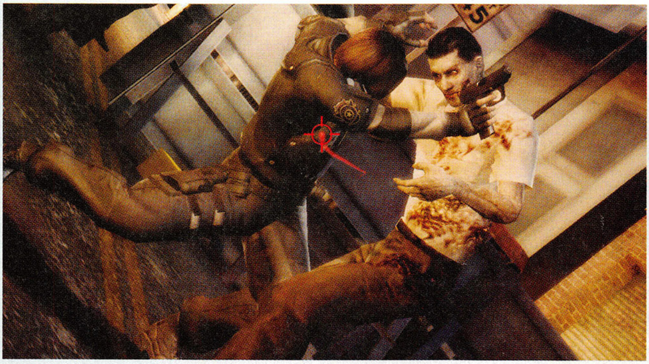
Evil Rises Again

Capcom welcomes Wii owners back to the world of survival-horror with light-gun shooter **Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles**, as well as rereleases of **Resident Evil** and **Resident Evil Zero**.

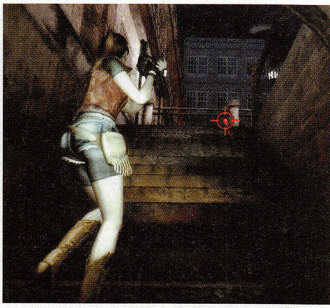


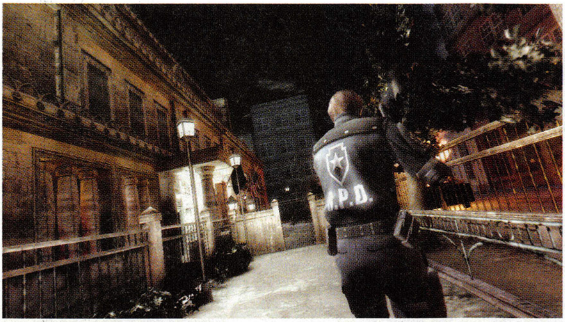
After the critical and financial success of 2007's Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, it's natural that Capcom would develop a sequel. After all, that game covered only the events of Resident Evil Zero, Resident Evil, and Resident Evil 3: Nemesis. Light-gun shooter Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles tackles Resident Evil 2.

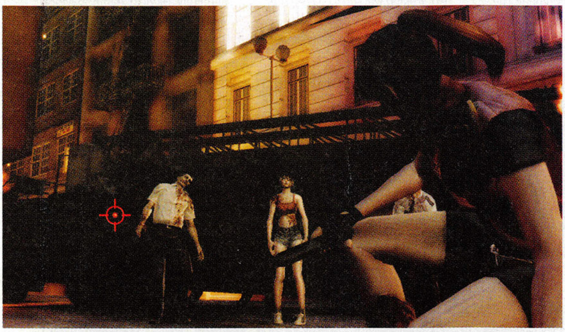
One of the most popular iterations in the M-rated Resident Evil franchise, RE2 introduced fan-favorite characters Claire Redfield and Leon S. Kennedy (both of whom reappeared in last year's *Resident Evil: Degeneration* CG movie). In Darkside Chronicles, you'll assume the role of one character and fight alongside the other—either an AI-controlled ally, or a human buddy if you're playing cooperatively—blasting your way through the zombie-infested Raccoon City and reliving Resident Evil 2's most memorable moments. In addition, Darkside Chronicles features an entirely new story about Leon's missions in South America earlier in his life. There's



[Below] Hopefully you can shoot zombie Brad Vickers on your way to the police station.



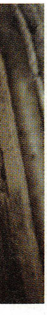


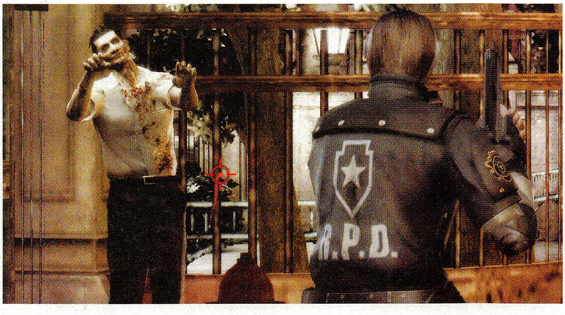


no word on who your companions are for this adventure, but Capcom revealed that Darkside Chronicles will have multiple characters to choose from.

Gameplay seems to remain mostly unchanged from that of Umbrella Chronicles: you point the Wii Remote at your TV screen like a gun and blast your way through interactive paths. However, one new gameplay addition is the Evade system; Capcom isn't revealing any details about it yet, except to say that it uses the Wii Remote in some way for "a more intense experience when fighting enemies."

But wait—there's even more survival-horror goodness on the way! If you missed out on the GameCube-exclusive Resident Evil Zero or the remake of the first Resident Evil, you're in luck: Capcom's re-releasing both games for Wii as part of its new Resident Evil "Classics" line. The only real differences between these new Wii versions and the original GameCube editions are the price ($29.99 MSRP) and the controls, which have been reconfigured to support the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. Both the rereleases and Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles will hit store shelves later this year. **—JUSTIN C.**





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Found in Translation

Miami Law isn't just a TV-show-inspired crime-fighting DS game; it's the long-awaited first project from Gaijinworks.

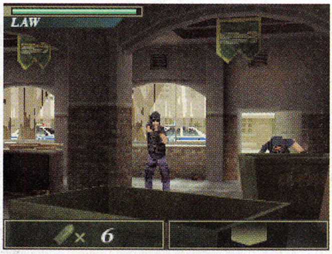
Inspired by contemporary prime-time crime dramas, Miami Law, developed and published by Hudson, puts you in the shoes of police officer Law Martin and FBI agent Sara Starling as you save the city of Miami from terrorists. Using the Nintendo DS's touch screen or traditional controls, players will face deadly shoot-outs, engage in high-speed pursuits, investigate puzzlelike crime scenes, and more. In this case, however, words may speak louder than actions—Miami Law is the first localization project from Gaijinworks, the studio founded by Victor Ireland, former president of Working Designs (the company responsible for bringing beloved games such as Lunar: The Silver Star to North America).

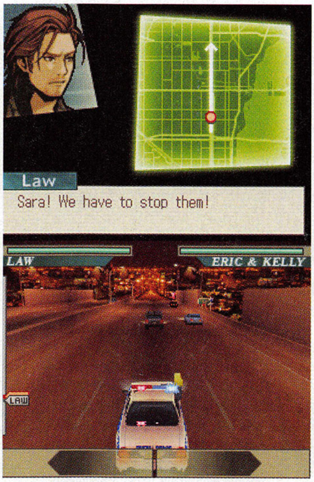
According to Ireland, gamers can expect Miami Law to feature the same type of quality writing that made Working Designs arguably the premiere name in localization in the 1990s. "The philosophy is very similar, but the tone of this game demanded a much harder edge," he states. "There is definitely comedy and some fun wordplay, but it's a police drama, so the localization reflects that.... The tone of the game would be similar to something like what we did for Arc the Lad, with maybe a little harder edge."

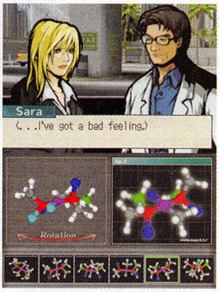
In addition to writing the game's text, Ireland worked to secure the authentic Miami-scene musical talents of Miami Beat Wave and took the Japanese development team on an extensive research trip to the real-life city. The result is a game that should be a unique fusion of Eastern and Western cultures. "I think the research trip helped the team set the place and tone," comments Ireland, "but the characters are definitely drawn and act with an anime influence."

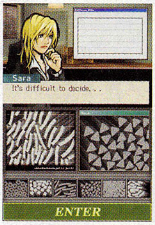
Although Miami Law isn't an RPG—the genre that Working Designs was best known for—Ireland hopes it will resonate with gamers familiar with his projects. "It's definitely a style of game I haven't worked in before personally, but I've always been a fan of the adventure game, from the old point-and-click adventures right up through stuff like Phoenix Wright," he remarks. "I think longtime fans of what we did at Working Designs will definitely get the flavor of our style in the game. But I promise, there are no Clinton jokes."

Look for Miami Law in stores this June. —**CHRIS H.**

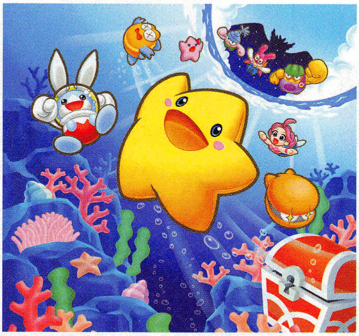



Law
Sara! We have to stop them!


Sara
(. . .I've got a bad feeling.)


Sara
It's difficult to decide. . .

Miami Law is like a hit prime-time drama—but with less David Caruso.



Fifth Try's the Charm

It's official: Nintendo is bringing **The Legendary Starfy**'s newest DS adventure to western shores.

Starfy may not be well known to US audiences, but in Japan, he's headlined five portable adventures since his 2002 Game Boy Advance debut. The diminutive hero's only appearance on this side of the Pacific was as an Assist Trophy in Super Smash Bros. Brawl (then written as "Stafy"). That brief cameo must have whetted some appetites somewhere, as Nintendo has decided to localize the character's fifth adventure with the title The Legendary Starfy, due for release on June 8th.

We've yet to see the North American edition of the game, but we can tell you that the Japanese version is a colorful and fast-paced platformer from the developer of Super Princess Peach. Starfy is joined on his adventure by a bunny-eared visitor from space, who can transform Starfy into anything from a frost-breathing seal to a chicken with a room-clearing cock-a-doodle-do. The adventure spans eight worlds and well over fifty levels, and a second player can control Starfy's sister for wireless co-op action. —**CASEY L.**

GAME WATCH FORECAST

Wii

Arc Rise Fantasia	XSEED/ Marvelous USA	SPR 09
Bakugan	Activision	Q4 09
The Beatles: Rock Band	MTV Games	9/09
The Bigs 2	2K Sports	SUM 09
Boom Blox Bash Party	Electronic Arts	5/09
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	FALL 09
Brave: A Warrior's Tale	SouthPeak	7/09
Chaotic	Activision	FALL 09
The Conduit	Sega	6/09
Cursed Mountain	Deep Silver	2009
Dead Space Extraction	Electronic Arts	FALL 09
The Destiny of Zorro	505 Games	TBA
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
EA Sports Active	Electronic Arts	SPR 09
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Atari	6/09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	SUM 09
Go Play: Circus Star	Majesco	FALL 09
Go Play: City Sports	Majesco	SUM 09
Go Play: Lumberjacks	Majesco	5/09
Grand Slam Tennis	EA Sports	2009
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	Activision	2009
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Help Wanted	Hudson	5/09
Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	Activision	SUM 09
Indiana Jones and the Staff of Kings	LucasArts	SPR 09
Let's Tap	Sega	SUM 09
Little King's Story	XSEED/ Marvelous USA	SUM 09
Little League World Series Baseball 2009	Activision	2009
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	2009
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
The Munchables	Namco Bandai	5/09
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	XSEED/ Marvelous USA	2nd Half 09
MySims Racing	Electronic Arts	2009
Need for Speed Nitro	Electronic Arts	Q3 09
New Play Control! Donkey Kong Jungle Beat	Nintendo	5/09
No More Heroes: Desperate Struggle	TBA	2010
Our House: Party!	Majesco	6/09
Overlord Dark Legend	Codemasters	1st Half 09
Phantom Brave	NIS America	6/09
Play the World	DreamCatcher	6/09
Punch-Out!!	Nintendo	5/09
Puzzle Kingdoms	Zoo Games	Q1 09
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rabbids Go Home	Ubisoft	2009
Real Heroes: Firefighter	Conspiracy	Q2 09
Reel Fishing: Angler's Dream	Natsume	5/09
Resident Evil	Capcom	2009
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	Capcom	WIN 09
Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	2009
Roogoo Twisted Towers	SouthPeak	6/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sam & Max Season Two	Atari	2009
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	2009
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	Konami	2009
Sin and Punishment 2	Nintendo	2009
Spectrobes: Origins	Disney	FALL 09
Spore Hero	Electronic Arts	2009
Spyborgs	Capcom	2009
Story Hour Adventures	Zoo	2009
Story Hour Fairy Tales	Zoo	2009
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash Up	Ubisoft	9/09
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	EA Sports	6/09
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	Activision	2009
Up	THQ	SPR 09
Virtua Tennis 2009	Sega	5/09
Wii Sports Resort	Nintendo	2009
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	Activision	5/09

NINTENDO DS

Again: Eye of Providence	Tecmo	SPR 09
Bakugan	Activision	Q4 09
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Brave: Shaman's Challenge	SouthPeak	7/09
Chaotic	Activision	FALL 09
Dawn of Discovery	Ubisoft	SUM 09
Dawn of Heroes	Majesco	6/09
de Blob	THQ	Q2 09
DiRT 2	Codemasters	9/09
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Master	DreamCatcher	4/09
Drama Queens	Majesco	SPR 09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	2009
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	10/09
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	2009
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	Atari	6/09
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	Electronic Arts	SUM 09
Guitar Hero Modern Hits	Activision	2009
The Hardy Boys: Treasure on the Tracks	Sega	SPR 09
Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince	Electronic Arts	7/09
Harvest Moon Frantic Farming	Natsume	6/09
Hot 'n' Cold	Majesco	2009
I Love Beauty: Hollywood Superstar Makeover	City Interactive	Q2 09
Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs	Activision	SUM 09
Infinite Space	Sega	2009
Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past	Aksys	5/09
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	Square Enix	2009
Knights in the Nightmare	Atlus	6/09
Last King of Africa	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
The Legendary Starfy	Nintendo	6/09
LEGO Battles	Warner Bros.	2009
Little League World Series Baseball 2009	Activision	2009
Magician's Quest Mysterious Times	Konami	5/09
Mario & Luigi RPG 3*	Nintendo	2009
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	Sega	2009
Marker Man Adventures	Majesco	6/09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Black Ace	Capcom	8/09
Mega Man Star Force 3: Red Joker	Capcom	8/09
Miami Law	Hudson	6/09
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	FALL 09
Monsters Racers	Koei	2009
MySims Racing	Electronic Arts	2009
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Council 4	Tomy	SUM 09
Overlord Minions	Codemasters	1st Half 09
Personal Trainer: Walking	Nintendo	5/09
Pet Vet Down Under	Deep Silver	TBA
Phantasy Star 0	Sega	FALL 09
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Puzzle Kingdoms	Zoo Games	Q1 09
Rockin' Pretty	Aksys	6/09
Roogoo Attack!	SouthPeak	6/09
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Sands of Destruction	Sega	SUM 09
Scribblenauts	TBA	Q4 09
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor	Atlus	SUM 09
Sushi Academy	City Interactive	Q2 09
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	Activision	2009
Treasure World	Aspyr	Q2 09
Up	THQ	SPR 09
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
A Witch's Tale	NIS America	2009
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	Activision	5/09

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BITS OF TID

Go Big or Go Home

2K Sports brings more arcadey baseball to Wii.

If you think the great American pastime is too slow-paced, 2K Sports has just the game for you: The Bigs 2. This sequel to the 2007 original features more over-the-top baseball action and more minigames such as Home Run Pinball.

Roll Out

The Bakugan craze comes to Wii and DS.

Activision has acquired the video game rights to the wildly popular Bakugan card game and animated series, and will publish Wii and DS titles based on the franchise this fall. Both versions are under development at NOW Production (Little League World Series 2008), and will recreate all of the elements that made Bakugan a worldwide phenomenon.

Hero Maker

Sonic the Hedgehog's cocreator signs on for a new Pac-Man.

Hirokazu Yasuhara, one of the original members of Sonic Team and the director of all four Sonic the Hedgehog titles for the Sega Genesis, is lending his talents to another video game icon: Pac-Man. Namco Bandai announced that the designer (who most recently worked at Naughty Dog) will spearhead a brand-new project slated to coincide with Pac-Man's 30th anniversary in 2010.

DOWNLOAD

The Wii Channels section is now Download.
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IN THIS SECTION

DSiWARE PREVIEW
Mighty Flip Champs

WiiWARE IN-DEPTH
Cave Story

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Adventure Island: The Beginning

WiiWARE PREVIEW
Night Game

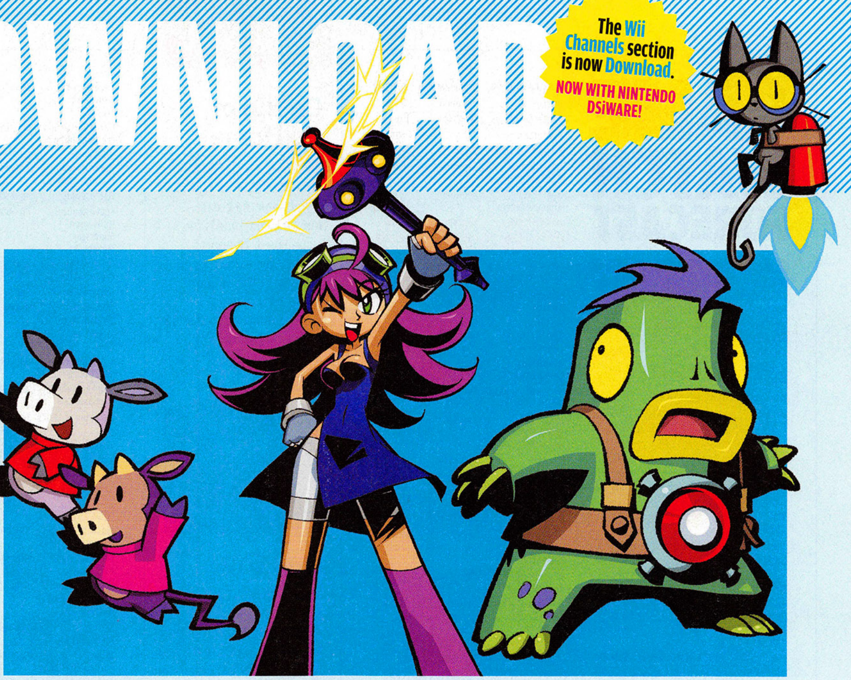
WiiWARE PREVIEW
Swords & Soldiers

VIRTUAL CONSOLE UPDATE
What is Commodore 64?

RESULTS
Most-Wanted Virtual Console Games

4 WiiWARE REVIEWS
EVASIVE SPACE
FAMILY & FRIENDS PARTY
GRADIUS REBIRTH
ONSLAUGHT

6 VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
ALEX KIDD: THE LOST STARS
INTERNATIONAL KARATE
THE LAST NINJA
LIFE FORCE
OGRE BATTLE: THE MARCH OF THE BLACK QUEEN
PIT STOP II

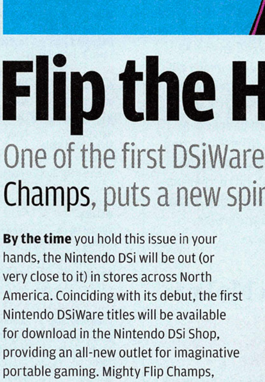


Flip the Heck Out!

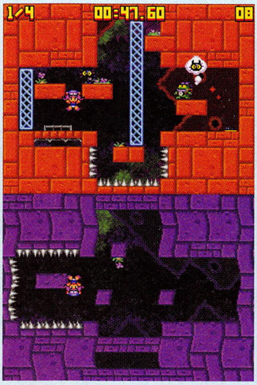
One of the first DSiWare titles, **Mighty Flip Champs**, puts a new spin on puzzle-platforming.

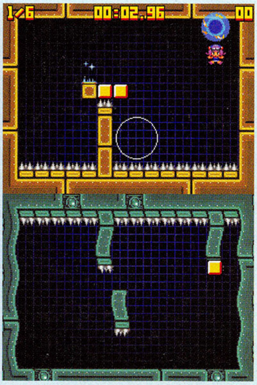
By the time you hold this issue in your hands, the Nintendo DSi will be out (or very close to it) in stores across North America. Coinciding with its debut, the first Nintendo DSiWare titles will be available for download in the Nintendo DSi Shop, providing an all-new outlet for imaginative portable gaming. Mighty Flip Champs, a puzzle-platformer from WayForward Technologies (the developer of games such as LIT and the upcoming Wii remake of A Boy and His Blob), will be one of the early Nintendo DSiWare offerings, and it promises to bend your brain like it's never been bent before.

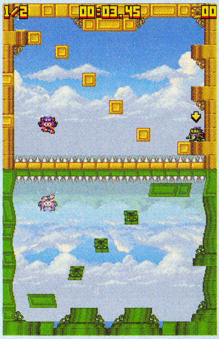
Mighty Flip Champs is built around a simple but unique core concept: the ability to "flip" the environment from the system's lower screen to the upper one. The game's spunky pink-haired heroine, Alta, can walk and climb, but that's about it for her innate skills; fortunately, she's also got a Magical Warp Wand that lets her flip through the environments as if they were the pages of a book. As you control Alta on

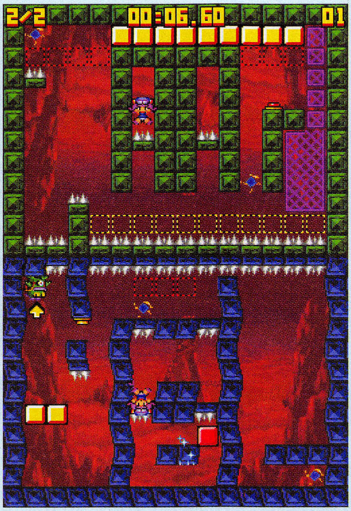


See those deadly spikes? Get used to 'em—they're on almost every stage.

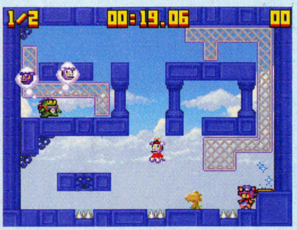




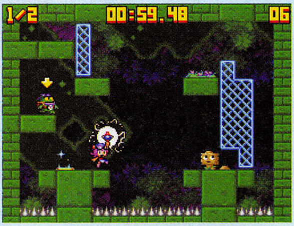




[Right] Advanced stages feature switch-controlled blocks and more.



[Above] What's the deal with the cows? Think of them as keys, only more amusing and tastier.

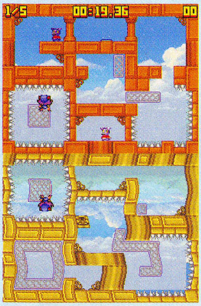


the upper screen, you'll be able to see the next environment—and Alta's position in it—on the bottom screen. When you can't proceed any further in your current environment, it takes only the press of a button to flip to the next room. By cleverly maneuvering your character and flipping from room to room, you'll be able to reach the goal in each stage.

"[My brother] Mark and I came up with a list of ingredients that we felt players would want in a launch game and designed around that," explains designer/director Matt Bozon. "Things on the list were to keep it small in scope, huge bang for the buck, inspired exclusively by the DS hardware, gameplay on both screens, bite-sized play you'll want to keep on your SD card forever, and a way to hook players and not let go. We landed on this idea of navigating a maze that was printed on a stack of index cards, flipping one to the next while a character tries to survive the transitions."

Though Mighty Flip Champs starts off fairly simple, allowing you to flip back and forth between two rather basic rooms, it quickly becomes complex. Eventually you'll flip through sequences of six or more "pages," encounter NPCs that you must reach before activating the exit, interact with level elements (such as switches that make blocks appear or disappear), and face intense challenge stages where the rooms flip automatically. There are no enemies (and no story for that matter), but there's plenty to keep players occupied.

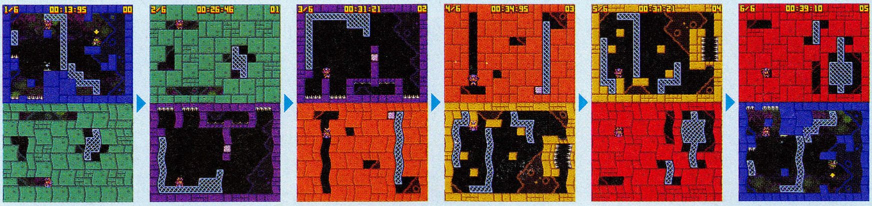
"The game grows by adding new mechanics like warps that move you from one point to another on the current page," lead programmer Chris Losorelli reveals. "There are also several colors of switch blocks fed by multiple switches, so paths will open and close as you progress through a stage. Once you hit a switch, a row of blocks that once covered a pit of spikes is no longer there, which can really mess you up. We've also got cracked blocks that can only be crushed by page-flipping into them to break them. We had a lot of other ideas as well, but we decided not to add too many layers of complexity."

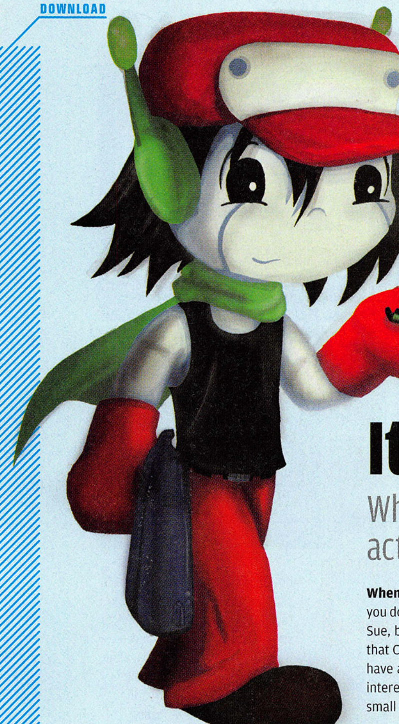


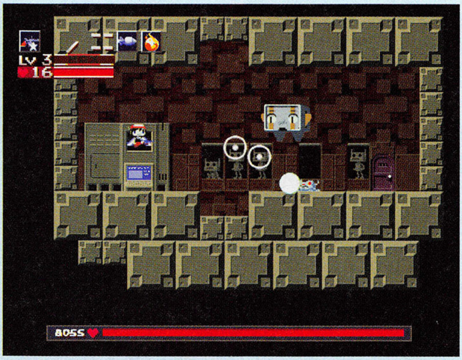
According to Bozon, Mighty Flip Champs is the kind of game that's ideal for download. "Honestly, I'd rather not pursue retail for this kind of game," he admits. "We've been developing on Nintendo handhelds since Game Boy monochrome and found that many of our best efforts still sell very low numbers, even when there's a 9.0 score and rabid fans singing praise. High-quality DS games that exist purely for their own sake have difficulty surviving at retail in the current climate. So Nintendo DSiWare is incredibly appealing to us. We can create the games that players have been asking us to make without worrying about being steamrolled by popular, trendy games that fill the shelf. Better still, there will be an infinite supply for the players who want them."

If you consider yourself among that group, boot up your Nintendo DSi and head to the Nintendo DSi Shop to download one of the most innovative portable games in recent memory. If Mighty Flip Champs isn't available as you read this, it will be soon. —**CHRIS H.**

The sequence below demonstrates how you progress through a level. The lower screen shows where you'll be located when you flip to the next "page."





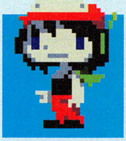


It Came from the Cave

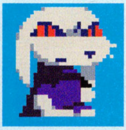
What will you encounter when you play WiiWare action-adventure Cave Story? Plenty.

When Cave Story begins, you don't know who your player character is, you don't know where you are, and you don't even have a way to fight enemies. Cut-scenes tell you that some guy is looking for a person named Sue, but that's about all the background you'll get. Fortunately, it takes only about a second to figure out that Cave Story is a retro-style 2-D action-adventure in the vein of NES classics such as Metroid, and if you have any interest in that type of game you're going to be in old-school heaven. Cave Story is packed with interesting characters, varied weaponry, and a diverse selection of items and environments. Read on for a small sample of what's in store for you in this very promising WiiWare game from Nicalis. —CHRIS H.

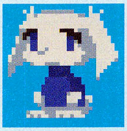
CHARACTERS!



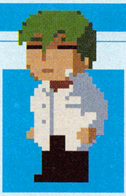
MISTER TRAVELER
The amnesiac hero of Cave Story. He's tougher than he looks.



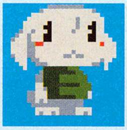
KING
The leader of the rabbitlike Mimiga people of Mimiga Village.



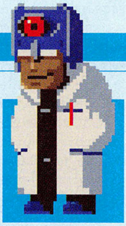
SUE
Sue is on the run from bad guys. She takes refuge in Mimiga Village.



KAZUMA
While looking for his sister, Sue, Kazuma gets trapped in a room in Grasstown.

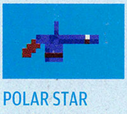


TOROKO
A young Mimiga who befriends Sue and gets captured in return.

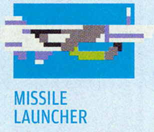


THE DOCTOR
This villain has nasty plans in store for the Mimiga people.

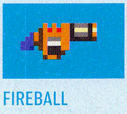
WEAPONS!



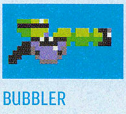
POLAR STAR
Your basic weapon. Power it up for better range.



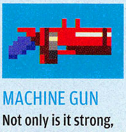
MISSILE LAUNCHER
Missiles are very powerful, but ammo is quite limited.



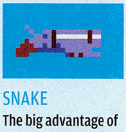
FIREBALL
Fireballs bounce along the ground; they're great for hilly terrain.



BUBBLER
The Bubbler offers three distinct firing patterns as it powers up.

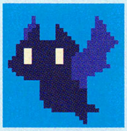


MACHINE GUN
Not only is it strong, but it can propel you into the air.



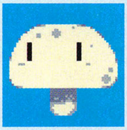
SNAKE
The big advantage of this weapon is that its shots can pass through walls.

ENEMIES!



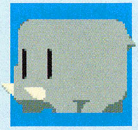
BAT

Bats are among the first enemies you encounter.



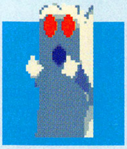
PIGNON

Mushrooms are made to be defeated, not eaten.



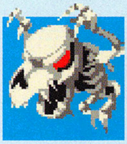
BEHEMOTH

It's big and strong, but slow and vulnerable to your attacks.



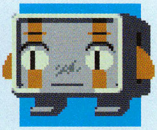
MANNAN

If you attack it, it will retaliate with a projectile.



SKELETON

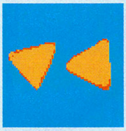
This horror leaps around in the desert sands.



BALROG

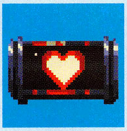
He might look like a suitcase, but he's actually a powerful boss.

ITEMS!



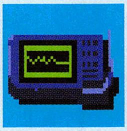
WEAPON CRYSTALS

Collect these crystals to level up your weapons.



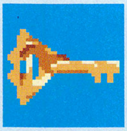
HEALTH CONTAINERS

These containers permanently increase your life meter.



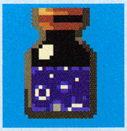
MAP SYSTEM

You'll need a map system unless you want to get lost.



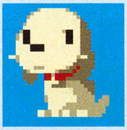
ARTHUR'S KEY

Arthur's house is an important location, but you'll need a key to get in.



JELLYFISH JUICE

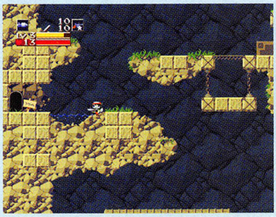
Strangely, Jellyfish Juice is the only thing that can put out fires.



PUPPIES

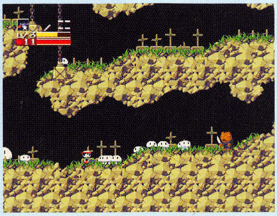
Yes, you'll need to acquire puppies. Go figure.

STAGES!



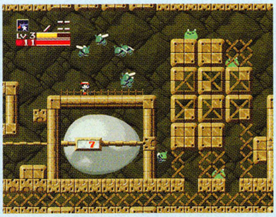
MIMIGA VILLAGE

The hub of Cave Story. A teleporter will take you to new areas.



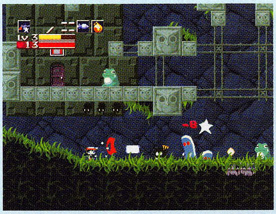
GRAVEYARD

The mushrooms have come to life here, but there's an important item to find.



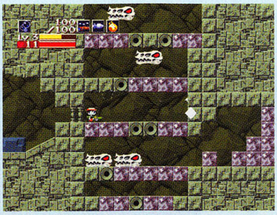
EGG CORRIDOR

The giant eggs in this area may be the key to your escape.



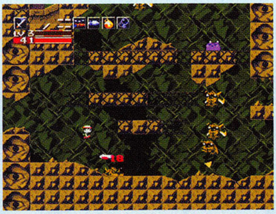
GRASSTOWN

Kazuma is trapped here. You must gather several items to set him free.



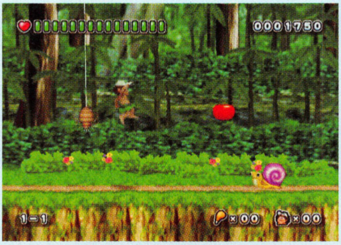
SAND ZONE

Sand crocs and skeletal foes are among the hazards you'll face.



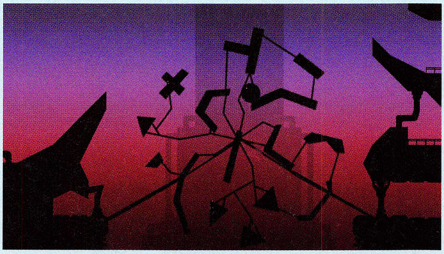
LABYRINTH

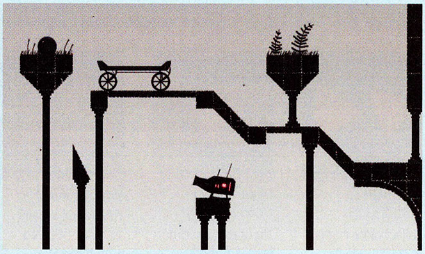
After a pivotal plot point, the bad guys will banish you to the labyrinth.



The Adventure Continues

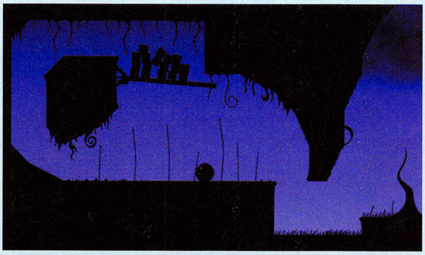
Hudson's venerable **Adventure Island** series has long been rumored to be heading for WiiWare, but now it's official—the classic platforming franchise is back and getting a 2.5-D makeover. Titled Adventure Island: The Beginning, the game features the grass-skirt-wearing Master Higgins once again running, jumping, and tossing hammers as he traverses hazard-filled tropical environments, collects fruit, and avoids deadly indigenous fauna. The game retains its predecessors' side-scrolling gameplay, but the visuals have been upgraded to 3-D and the title has been beefed up with multiple minigames (both single-player and multiplayer), including skateboarding and shooting challenges. **—CHRIS H.**





In Darkest Night

Night Game brings a puzzling physics experiment to the WiiWare scene.



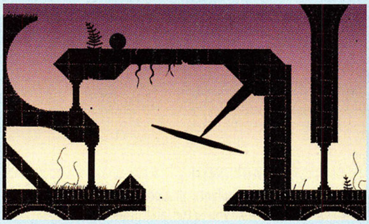
Night Game will likely not be called Night Game forever. According to the folks at developer/publisher Nicalis, the "Night" half of the title will probably stay, though—appropriate, given the grim and shadowy graphics. On the whole, it looks awfully foreboding for a game about scooting a little ball back and forth.

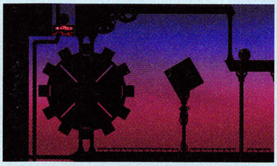
Of course, it's not as simple as that. Night Game is a physics-driven puzzle-platformer along the lines of LocoRoco or Marble Madness. The goal is to move a featureless black ball, controlled with the Wii Remote's Control Pad, from one end of each 2-D level to the other. That ball isn't the only thing under your control, though. Night Game expects its players to fiddle with the basic rules of the game world itself.

The maximum possible speed of the ball is one variable (which is intuitive enough), but another is what eggheads call *mu*, the coefficient of friction. That determines how much speed the ball loses as it rolls along and how likely it is to lose its grip on a surface—handy when the ball needs to roll down a hill, build a good head of steam, and throw itself off a ski jump. You can also choose to tackle a level upside down by inverting the pull of gravity.

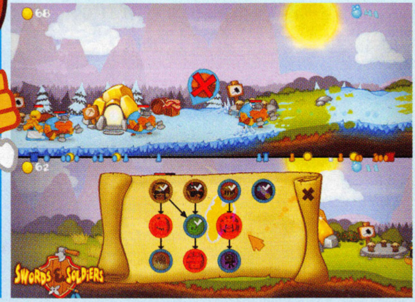
Clearing a level isn't just a matter of carefully tapping the Control Pad. The real trick is sizing up each stage in advance and figuring out how to tweak the physics to gain an advantage. The level designs serve up some meaty food for thought. Simple obstacles—ramps to fly off, gaps to leap—give way to head-spinning constructions such as an elaborate rotating maze.

The finished game will have 13 expansive stages (some of them built around vehicles that have their own unique behavior), plus a few secret bonus levels to challenge dedicated players. With its blend of simple controls and complex challenge, Night Game looks like the kind of game that's perfect for WiiWare—no matter what title it winds up with. **—DAVID S.**





Something about this game looks a bit shady. Get it? Shady? Yes, folks, I'll be here all week.



Soldier On

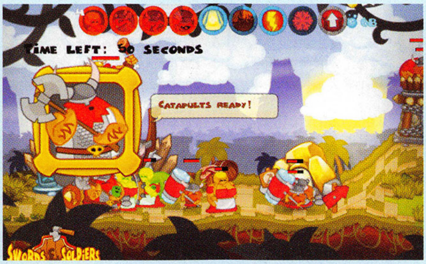
Three cultures collide in **Swords & Soldiers**, a real-time strategy WiiWare game from the creators of de Blob.

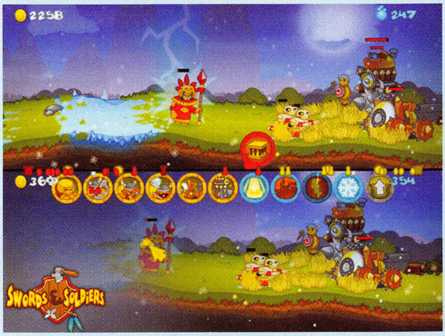
If you've played THQ's de Blob for Wii, you know that it's colorful, creative, and imaginative—qualities you don't see in many games these days. But you might not know that de Blob was the brainchild of Dutch studio Ronimo Games. And the developers haven't been resting on their laurels since coming up with the original concept for de Blob; the company's website (http://ronimo.hku.nl) says the staff is "striving to create new, innovative and exciting games." The latest fruit of their labors is a 2-D, side-scrolling, real-time strategy title for WiiWare: Swords & Soldiers.

Swords & Soldiers gives you three factions to play with: Vikings, Aztecs, and a yet-to-be-revealed Asian culture. Each is portrayed in a charming cartoony style that gives the game a light, fun feel that is further emphasized by the story and dialogue. For example, the Vikings want nothing more than to have a barbeque, but the nefarious Viking Blackbeard crashes the party, so they chase him across the globe, meeting the other factions along the way. But these are Vikings we're talking about, so the encounters often turn violent; fortunately, the game eases you into things. After assigning units to gather gold (by pointing and pressing A at the appropriate icon on your HUD; everything is controlled by the Wii Remote alone), you can spend your money on axe-swinging or -throwing soldiers. They'll start moving across the field and attacking any threats automatically, but you can assist them with magic, either using a defensive spell (Heal, for instance) on your units or casting an offensive spell (such as Lightning) on your enemies. (Using the Remote as a pointer, you select a spell then press A while pointing at the unit you want to affect.) Depending on how much fog of war there is, you may be able to strike lightning down on your foes before your soldiers even reach them (simply press left or right on the Control Pad to move the camera to your target), making the battles go by quicker. Of course, spells require Mana, but it replenishes constantly and you can spend gold to increase the regeneration rate.

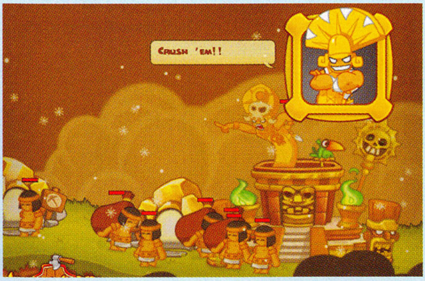
Obviously, we're just scratching the surface; there's a lot of strategy involved, especially as other units and magic are added to the equation. Thankfully, you can practice in the player-versus-computer Skirmish mode or in the player-versus-player split-screen Versus mode, as all of your units and spells are unlocked from the start in both modes. —**JUSTIN C.**

Select a level
Start
Back
Swords & Soldiers



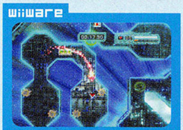


[Left] The Vikings' Lightning is very powerful against individual soldiers.
[Below] Yep, those guys are really crushing those gold mines.



EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare



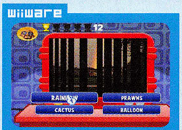
EVASIVE SPACE

PUBLISHER: **YUKE'S**
GENRE: **ACTION**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Evasive Space has an interesting control scheme and concept: using the Wii Remote as a pointer, you direct your ship to the goal within the time limit while trying to avoid as many enemies as possible. Hitting baddies will slow you down, but the labyrinthine levels are filled with plentiful power-ups to help you out. Unfortunately, the loose controls and the heavy reliance on trial and error can make the game more frustrating than fun. —**JUSTIN C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



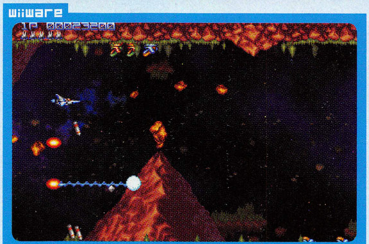
FAMILY & FRIENDS PARTY

PUBLISHER: **GAMMICK ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PARTY GAME**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Family & Friends Party won't stop you from having a good time with your pals, but it won't offer much help either. You can perform many of the title's activities, such as Charades and a sketch-guessing challenge, while experiencing little interaction with the game itself. A music-sequence test and a word-clue puzzle offer more gameplay, but this party is far from a classy affair. —**GEORGE S.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare



GRADIUS REBIRTH

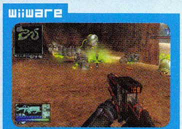
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** · GENRE: **SHOOTER** · Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Chris H's Pick

The Gradius series has long been one of best shooter franchises around, and Gradius ReBirth carries on that tradition with style. It doesn't break any new ground—it's practically a highlight reel of past Gradius games—but it has all the ingredients that fans of the series love (intense action, responsive controls, challenging enemies, multiple weapon sets, giant Moai heads...you know, the usual) wrapped up in a nice 16-bit-style package. The variable difficulty is appreciated, too. My only criticism is the music; given that it's culled from past Gradius games, it should have featured better tracks.

Recommended

WiiWare



ONSLAUGHT

PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Yes, Onslaught may have lackluster presentation and repetitive gameplay (reading text and shooting waves of giant green-blooded bugs can get old), but the game is still an impressive piece of software, especially with its relatively low cost. For the price of a movie ticket, you get some fun first-person shooter action (in fact, it's the only WiiWare FPS thus far) that controls well and features online co-op for up to four players. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

Console Crasher

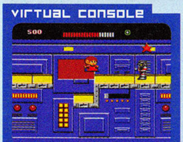
The Commodore 64 has debuted on Virtual Console in North America. Here's why you should care.

A quick glance at this month's Virtual Console reviews will reveal a new addition to the platforms represented—Commodore 64. If you're not familiar with the venerable machine, here's the skinny: The Commodore 64 became the best-selling computer in the United States within months of its 1982 release, steamrolling the video game industry on its way to the top. A 1983 advertising campaign took aim at the game consoles of the day, offering a $100 rebate to anyone who mailed in a game machine, and consumers were only too happy to swap their Atari 2600s and ColecoVisions for the superior graphics and expanded capabilities of a true personal computer. Thus the Commodore 64 helped cause the video game-industry crash of '83—and claimed most of the spoils.

The surviving software publishers flocked to the C64, first with ports of popular arcade and Atari 2600 games, and then with more-advanced fare that took advantage of the computer's keyboard and the increased capacity of its optional floppy-disc drive. The Commodore 64 stood at the cutting edge of gaming until the 1985 release of the NES marked the resurgence of home consoles and gave the Commodore 64 a comparably powered rival. While the slower C64 had trouble catching up with the NES's fast-scrolling action and shooting games, it could still boast of trumping the new console in many fields, such as offering superior versions of most Western-developed 8-bit games (including Maniac Mansion and Pirates!), wowing players with digitized speech in Impossible Mission years earlier than the NES's Blades of Steel, and offering deep role-playing from The Bard's Tale, Ultima, and Dungeons & Dragons "Gold Box" series long before the debuts of Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy.

Now the Commodore 64 has joined its former nemesis on Virtual Console, giving Wii owners the best of both worlds. C64 games sell for the same 500 Wii Points as NES games, and the emulator features a full onscreen keyboard that players can bring up with a tap of the B Button. The launch titles—Pit Stop II, International Karate, and The Last Ninja—are hardly the platform's brightest stars. But an additional 16 Commodore 64 games are already available on Virtual Console in Europe. Highlights of the foreign library include the classic puzzle adventure Impossible Mission and its sequel, the shooter Uridium (a port of which was released as The Last Starfighter on the NES), puzzle-platformer Nebulus, and the Commodore 64's most technically impressive title, the Mario-esque Mayhem in Monsterland. —**CASEY L.**

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



ALEX KIDD: THE LOST STARS

PLATFORM: **MASTER SYSTEM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Although it sounds contradictory, Alex Kidd: The Lost Stars is easy and frustrating at the same time. You've got an unlimited number of continues, and you basically run past enemies most of the time. But it's irritating to crash into hazards that seem to appear out of nowhere, cheaply killing you and forcing you to hear Alex's annoying death scream again and again. —**JUSTIN C.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

INTERNATIONAL KARATE

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **COMMODORE GAMING/ ACTIVISION**
GENRE: **FIGHTING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1986**

A simple one-on-one fighter with sluggish controls, a shallow move list, terrible hit detection, and little variety, International Karate is a poor man's rip-off of Data East's Karate Champ arcade game. Its character animation is impressive and the world-landmark backdrops are cool, but International Karate has little else to offer today. —**CASEY L.**

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

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LIFE FORCE

PLATFORM: **NES** · PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
GENRE: **SHOOTER** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1988**

Chris H's Pick

Life Force is one of the most accessible shooters out there. This Gradius spin-off has all the hardcore goodness the genre is about—including pattern-heavy gameplay and Konami's trademark power-up system—plus it's got co-op action and a forgiving respawn system. Some might overlook Life Force given that the technologically superior Gradius ReBirth is now available, but at only 500 Wii Points, there's no excuse for passing this one up.

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

THE LAST NINJA

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **COMMODORE GAMING/ STUDIO 3**
GENRE: **ACTION**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1987**

The Last Ninja was one of the C64's most successful titles, but 20 years later it feels more like a curiosity than a classic. But while it's certainly no Zelda or Metroid, those who are willing to struggle through the game's nonintuitive control scheme and high level of frustration will find a unique and intriguing adventure. —**CASEY L.**

Hmmm...

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

OGRE BATTLE: THE MARCH OF THE BLACK QUEEN

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** · PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
GENRE: **STRATEGY** · ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1995**

Casey L's Pick

Ogre Battle launched the career of notable game designer Yasumi Matsuno and was heralded as a major step in the evolution of strategy RPGs. And despite the rough interface and repetitive gameplay, Ogre Battle holds up surprisingly well. The real-time elements make for unusually exciting battles, and even after 15 years, the tarot-card and alignment systems still feel fresh.

Recommended

VIRTUAL CONSOLE

PITSTOP II

PLATFORM: **COMMODORE 64**
PUBLISHER: **COMMODORE GAMING/ EPYX**
GENRE: **RACING**
ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1984**

With pseudo-3D graphics and split-screen racing for two players, Pitstop II was a marvel in 1984. It also offered the series' titular twist: allowing players to pull into a pit stop and control the pit crew as they fill the tank and replace damaged tires. Pitstop II remains a cute novelty, but clumsy controls and repetitive visuals make it the most primitive racer on Virtual Console. —**CASEY L.**

Grumble Grumble

WANTED!

Will Ness ever get his chance to shine on Virtual Console? The readers certainly hope so, as they've once again voted Earthbound their number-one most wanted game. Meanwhile, the editors continue to hope for the Virtual Console release of some rare foreign gems.

READERS' MOST WANTED: ALL SYSTEMS

1. Earthbound (Super NES)
2. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)
3. Mother (NES/Japan only)
4. Super Smash Bros. (N64)
5. Donkey Kong 64 (N64)

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED: ALL SYSTEMS

1. Mega Man: The Wily Wars (Sega Genesis/Europe & Japan)
2. Castlevania: Rondo of Blood (TurboGrafx CD/ Japan only)
3. Super Punch-Out!! (Super NES)
4. Terranigma (Super NES/ Europe & Japan)
5. Contra (NES)

How do you role? We'll find out next issue with our list of most-wanted RPGs on Virtual Console. After that, we want to know what shooters (side-scrolling, FPS, or otherwise) you want to see. Send your top five most-wanted **shooters** to **vcpoll@nintendopower.com** and we'll print the results in the near future. Note: This is for polling purposes only and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

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Trust Issues

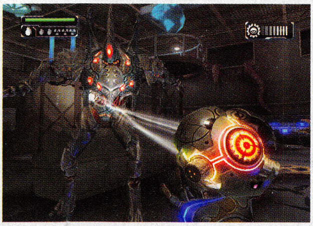
> THE CONDUIT

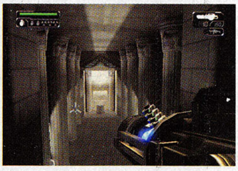
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **HIGH VOLTAGE SOFTWARE**
RELEASE: **JUNE 2009**

Now that The House of the Dead: Overkill and MadWorld have shipped to rave reviews (including an 8.0 and a 9.0, respectively, from Nintendo Power), we fix our anticipatory gaze on the final piece of Sega's hardcore Wii trifecta: The Conduit. Billed as the definitive first-person shooter for Nintendo's console, the game inches closer to that lofty goal every time we see it.

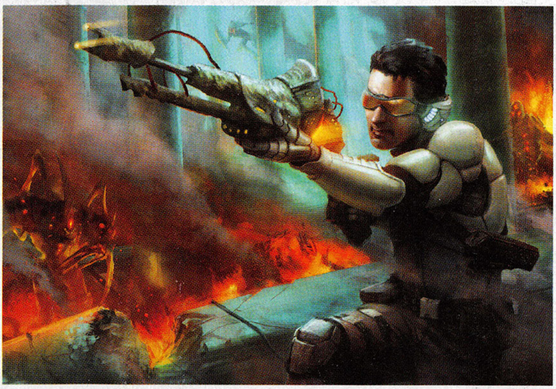
The latest build showcases a world that feels much more alive than in earlier versions. You really get the impression that you're in the middle of a massive alien invasion; helicopters zoom by and are occasionally shot down by the extraterrestrial aggressors, while frantic news reports blare from the televisions on display in shop windows. At the conclusion of the opening level, which finds protagonist Mr. Ford already in the thick of things, the game jumps back five days and takes you through the events leading up to the attack. Our hero starts as a Secret Service agent, but he's soon recruited into a clandestine organization known as The Trust. (The story definitely has a bit of an *X-Files* vibe going for it.) In one of the levels we saw, The Trust dispatches Mr. Ford to Reagan National Airport to track down a terrorist called Prometheus (named for the Greek Titan who stole fire from Zeus and gave it to mortals). At this point the aliens haven't shown up yet, so your adversaries are "puppet" agents whose wills are no longer their own. The enemy AI is another element that's been significantly tweaked since we last saw The Conduit, and to counter their wily ways, you can now crouch behind objects to take cover. The firefights offer a bit more depth as a result, but don't expect anything too tactical. The focus remains firmly on fast-paced, blast-them-before-they-blast-you action.

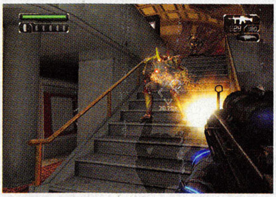
As mentioned in our previous coverage, one of The Conduit's coolest features is that you can modify the HUD as you see fit, snagging each element and dragging it anywhere on the screen. We've since learned that you can get rid of the HUD entirely for a more cinematic presentation, and alternative indicators are built into the game so you're not flying blind. If Ford's health gets dangerously low, for instance, you'll hear him start to breathe heavily, and your surroundings will gradually lose their color. Such clever ideas give us optimism that Sega's about to go three for three. —**STEVE T.**

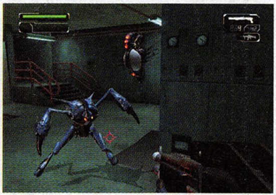


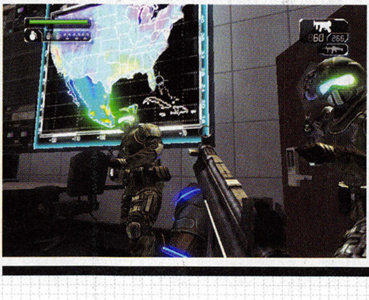


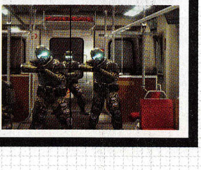
[Above] If you search carefully, you'll uncover secret chambers like this one, which contain special armaments.











This, I Command!

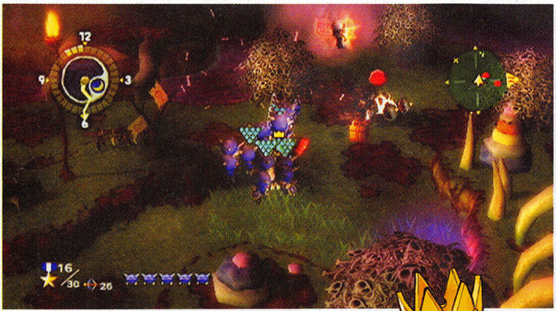
>LITTLE KING'S STORY

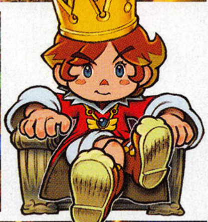
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MARVELOUS USA/XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **CING/TOWN FACTORY**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2009**

After chasing some rats through a hole in a wall, the young protagonist of Little King's Story is transported to a fantastical world in which he dons a magical crown and becomes ruler of the shabby Alpoko Kingdom. The coffers are empty and the citizens are too shiftless to do anything to rectify the situation. Yet your three advisors—particularly the bull-riding knight Howser, who claims to have been searching for 35 years for the true king—urge you to expand your kingdom to unify the world.

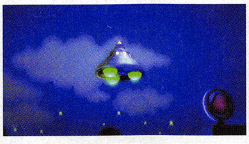
To achieve this goal, you must command your subjects, Pikmin-style, to get off their lazy butts and get their hands dirty—quite literally, as it turns out, since the only way to make money early in the game is to dig up treasures such as bars of gold. Simply walk up to whomever you want to recruit and press B to add the person to your entourage. To set someone on a task, point him at the target by using the Control Stick (pressing Z to bring up a targeting line helps) and press A to have your subject automatically get to work; since they have no specific skills at this point, however, the workers are pretty much only able to dig holes. As you gain more cash, you can build new structures such as a Farmhouse or a Guard House to train your citizens to become Hardworking Farmers (who excel at digging) or Grunt Soldiers (who specialize in swordfighting), respectively. Grunt Soldiers become especially important when you step out into the wild world beyond your borders; there are dangerous UMAs (unidentified mysterious animals) wandering around, and, more importantly, boss monsters called Guardian UMAs. They take many forms (a skull-headed cow, a giant frog), and defeating them clears the surrounding area of UMAs and adds land to your territory. There's a lot of world to conquer, though—seven kingdoms, in fact, each with a number of Guardian UMAs—and you must overthrow seven other kings to become the undisputed ruler of the world.

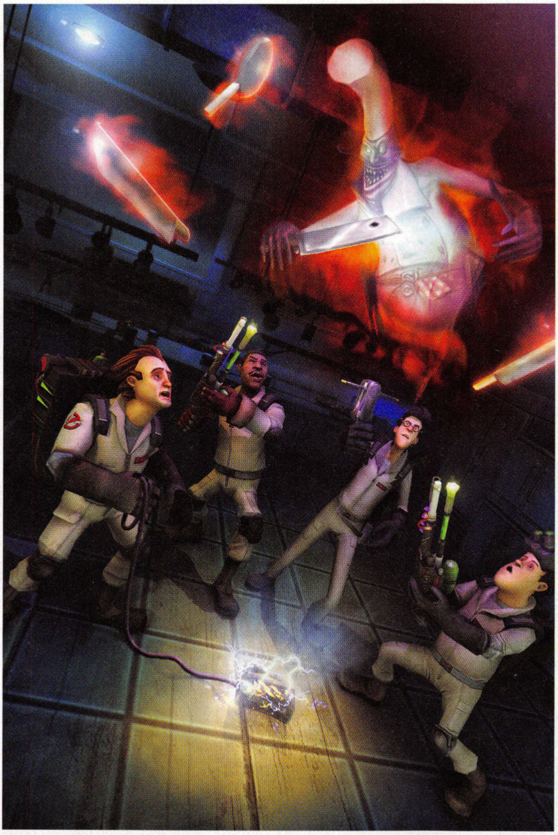
The first monarch you face is the enormous King Onii, which means you have to traverse the appropriately named Dark Valley, a rocky canyon that's blanketed in dark fog and filled with smaller Onii (who resemble Nibbler from *Futurama*). Some of these creatures stand on higher ground, lobbing rocks at you. Close-combat-centric Grunt Soldiers are useless in this situation, so it behooves you to train an army of arrow-slinging Animal Hunters (assuming you've built the required Hunter Hut and have the funds to train citizens). Even with this tactical advantage, many of your subjects may lose their lives while battling King Onii, but being a king means making tough decisions. **—JUSTIN C.**

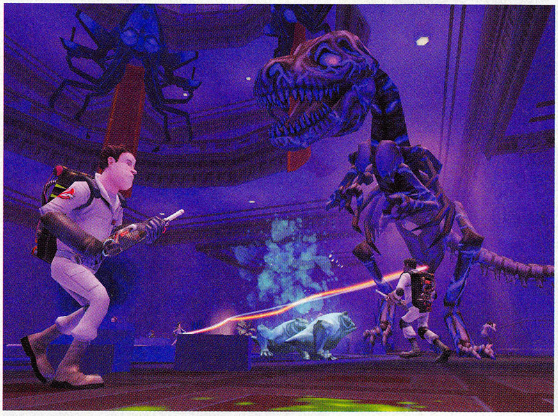




[Left] Cows are a recurring theme in the game. [Below] Aliens...not so much.







Cross the Streams

>GHOSTBUSTERS: THE VIDEO GAME

PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **RED FLY STUDIO** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2009**

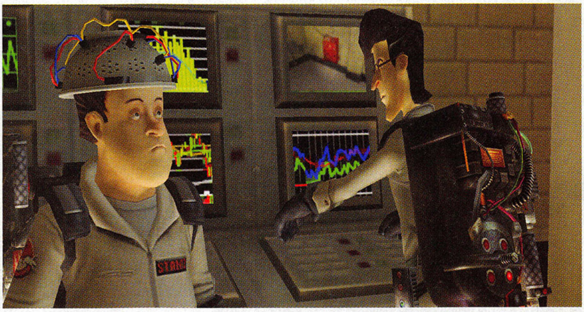
Once again, something strange is going on in New York City—paranormal activity is increasing at an alarming rate, and ghosts are running wild—and it's up to you as a rookie Ghostbuster to take care of it. You've got some help, of course. There's some new equipment in addition to your standard-issue proton pack, and all four of the original Ghostbusters return (voiced by their original actors) to help you bust ghosts, give you helpful tips, and entertain you with witty banter.

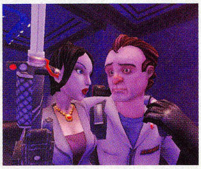
Some of your old foes return as well. You have to return to the Sedgewick Hotel to recapture Slimer, for instance. (He can't get enough of the food, we guess.) It's not a difficult task—this is the opening level, after all—but it gets you acquainted with the controls. The control scheme has changed since the last time we saw the game; you no longer have to shake the Nunchuk to activate the blast stream's wrangle cage when catching a ghost, and you can simply press Z to set a trap instead of performing a bowling motion with the Nunchuk.

Don't think you'll be doing the same tasks over and over again; there are some variations among the all-new and returning-favorite specters—some of which you use to solve puzzles. When the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man returns, you have to reach the roof of a skyscraper in Times Square so you can fight the enormous mascot face-to-face. Obviously it's easiest to take an elevator, but the power's out and you have to charge up the generator's battery to get it working again. Fortunately, there is an electrified construction-worker ghost floating around; using the blast stream on him directly will instantly overheat your proton pack, but you can cage the uncharged generator battery (as you can any object covered in ectoplasm) and touch the ghost with it. That immediately de-electrifies the spirit—making him bustable—while powering the battery. You can then place it into its slot, allowing you to progress to your showdown with Mr. Stay Puft.

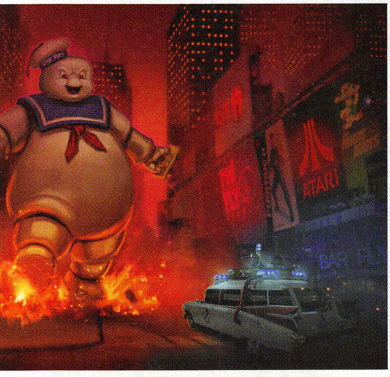
To fight the gigantic sailor (after battling your way through several floors of nasty apparitions), you rappel along the side of the building, looking down at the ascending monster. Don't worry—you don't have to cross the streams to defeat him (in fact, you couldn't even if you wanted to; Egon fixed the problem). You can, however, pepper him with Boson Darts by pressing A, and you can grab the ectoplasm-covered chunks of building he throws at you, then blast them back at him with a Boson Dart to deal even more damage. Once you've sufficiently charred Mr. Stay Puft, one last Boson Dart to the mouth is enough to turn him into marshmallow goo. S'mores, anyone? —**JUSTIN C.**

[Left] Since you're the new guy, you get to test all the new ghostbusting equipment.





[Below] You'd think you would avoid fire if you were made of marshmallow.

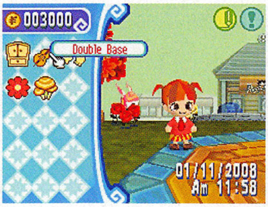


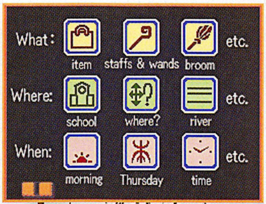
Tricky Sim

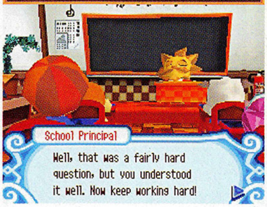
>MAGICIAN'S QUEST MYSTERIOUS TIMES

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **KONAMI** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

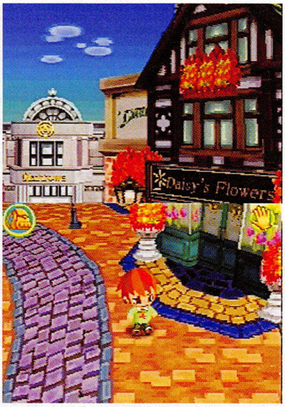
Formerly known as Little Magician's Magic Adventure, Konami's Animal Crossing-inspired wizarding-world sim is far from small. Magician's Quest Mysterious Times offers a year's worth of weekly mysteries that unfold in real time, and 1,500 items to collect for your magic-school dorm room. The name change is an indication that Konami sees the potential for wide appeal in the game; it's not just magic antics for the younger set. By swirling your stylus around your customizable character, you become a magic user, ready to call out magic spells and incantations with a symbol-based language. If you want to invoke Treasure Hunt magic, for example, you tap the symbols for Magic, Secret, and Seek, then hidden items show themselves by sparkling. Your status as a magician increases as you take classes and solve mysteries. You can also find and catalog fish and insects, do odd jobs for cash, and "study abroad" at the schools of other Magician's Quest players by way of Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection. **—GEORGE S.**






School Principal

Well, that was a fairly hard question, but you understood it well. Now keep working hard!

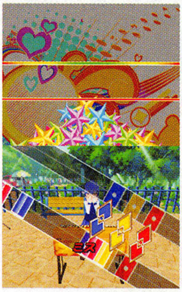


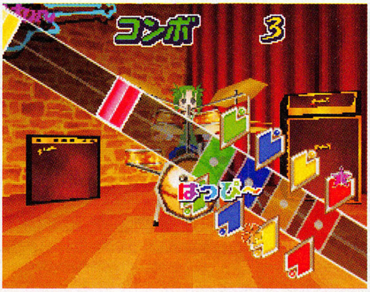
Truly, Truly Outrageous

>ROCKIN' PRETTY

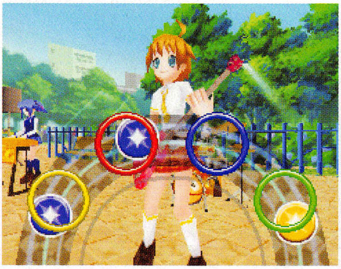
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS** • RELEASE: **JUNE 2009**

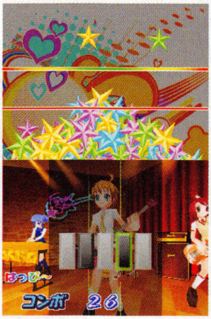
In rhythm game Rockin' Pretty, you can try your hand at four instruments—guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums—as you travel to eight tour events, earning currency that can be used to purchase new equipment, clothes, and hairstyles. So Rockin' Pretty is not all that different from titles such as Rock Band or Guitar Hero—except that it has an unfamiliar song selection (no Top 40 hits here) and a story centered on a quartet of cutesy anime-style girls who have big dreams of becoming rock stars. (The latter is little surprise; the game was developed by the creators of last year's equally cutesy Princess on Ice.) Rocking out is as easy as tapping or swiping on the cascading notes at the correct time; each of the four instruments uses only these two stylus motions, making it easy to switch to, say, drums whenever you're sick of playing guitar. **—JUSTIN C.**

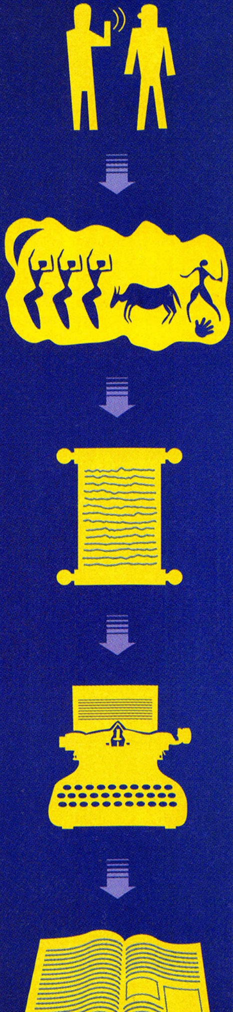




Play well and you'll get more stars, allowing you to buy new stuff. (Note: All screens are of the Japanese version.)







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Chip Off the Old Blox

>BOOM BLOX BASH PARTY

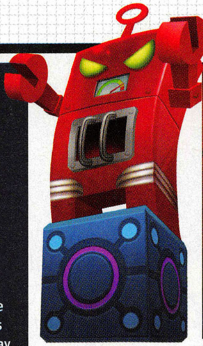
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CASUAL** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

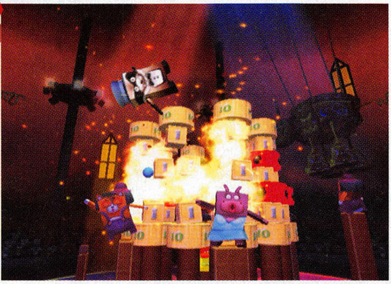
Boom Blox Bash Party—another collaboration between EA and Steven Spielberg—builds upon the foundation laid by last year's Boom Blox and takes it to the next level. It has the same pick-up-and-play accessibility, the same physics-based gameplay, and the same type of chaotic motion-controlled object-tossing puzzles, but there's a lot more to it this time around.

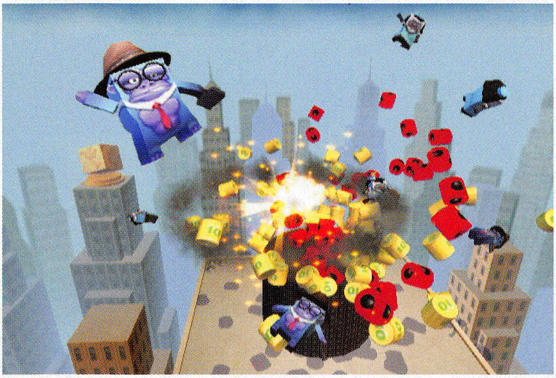
New block types (such as Fireworks Blox, which shoot projectiles when you hit them, and Slot Blox, which cycle through a variety of effects), block shapes (cylinders and wedges), and tools (including Chemical Balls that stay onscreen after you throw them and explode when two of them touch) are just the beginning. If you caught our Bash Party feature article in Vol. 239, you already know about the promising Space and Pirate Worlds, which add zero-gravity and underwater physics (respectively) to the Boom Blox concept. The recently revealed Showtime and Heroic Worlds don't attempt anything nearly as radical, but they offer thrills all their own. In single-player mode, Showtime World (which has a circus/stage-show theme) challenges players with three types of games: Color Combos (in which you attempt to make three blocks of the same color touch, causing them to disappear à la Bejeweled), Sling Alley (where you'll put the slingshot to good use), and Bull's Eye (in which you'll race the clock as you topple towers of Point Blox into a bonus multiplier). Heroic World, meanwhile, revolves around the tale of the heroic Super Pig battling an evil space monkey. In the Metropolis section you'll defend sheep from impending danger, then in the Refinery area you'll use a slingshot on Super Pig to earn points before venturing to the Secret Lair, where you'll throw bowling balls to smash the enemy base.

As you can tell by the game's title, Bash Party also has a strong multiplayer emphasis, and when you go head-to-head with up to three friends, each world offers a completely different type of fun. The multiplayer Showtime stages all emphasize color-based competition (such as attempting to knock down all the appropriately colored blocks in Color Topple or yanking out colored blocks, Jenga-style, in Color Dismantle), while the multiplayer Heroic modes are all point-oriented; Point Jackpot, for example, tasks you with discovering each level's gimmick to earn a huge point payoff.

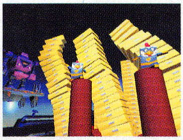
With more than 400 levels, Boom Blox Bash Party should keep players busy for a long time, but thanks to a robust stage editor and the ability to download player-created extra content, the game could be nearly infinite. If that's not a concept worthy of Steven Spielberg, we don't know what is. **—CHRIS H.**

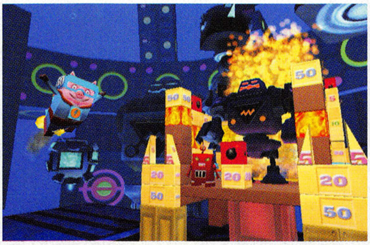


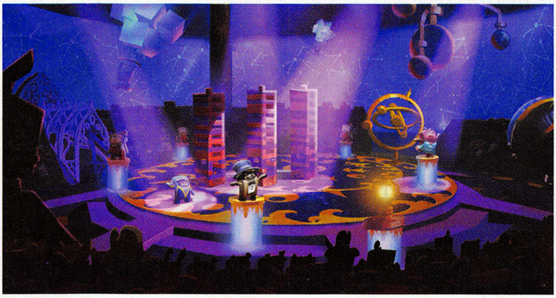




[Above] The fate of a city full of mild-mannered gorillas is in your hands in the superhero-themed Heroic World.



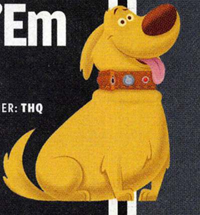




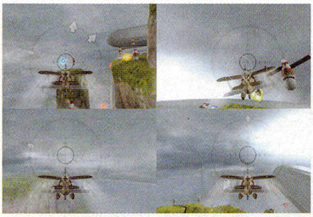
Up and at 'Em

>UP

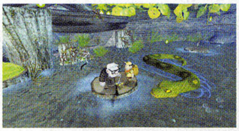
PLATFORM: **Wii (ALSO ON DS)** • PUBLISHER: **THQ**
DEVELOPER: **HEAVY IRON STUDIOS**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2009**

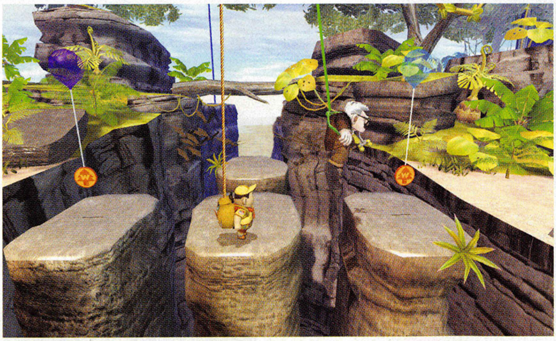


There's a heavy stigma attached to licensed games, but Up—the game based on the upcoming Disney/Pixar film of the same name—shows some promise with its variety and its emphasis on cooperative gameplay. The former is best illustrated by the first level we played, in which you assume the role of Doug the talking dog (thanks to his collar that translates his thoughts), who's flying a biplane to protect old man Carl's floating house from incoming biplane-flying enemies. The second level is quite different, focusing on Carl and Russell (a boy) venturing through a jungle. Each character has his own advantages: for example, Carl can grab onto vines with his cane, allowing him to boost up to higher platforms, whereas Russell can shimmy along ledges. The pair has to work together to solve the many puzzles throughout the level; but while you can swap between them by pressing Z when playing solo, it's much more enjoyable for you and a buddy to assume the roles of the two characters. **—JUSTIN C.**



[Above] Up to four players can hop in biplanes and fight each other in one of the separate multiplayer modes, but the main game is all about cooperation.



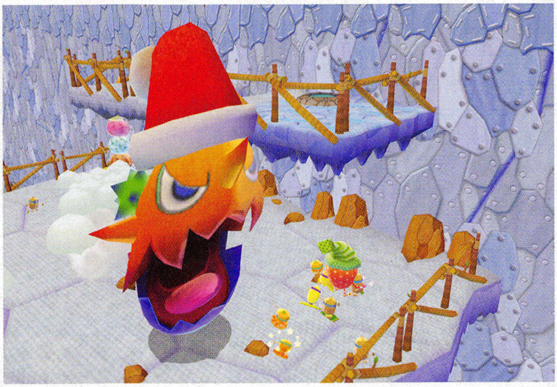


Get in My Belly!

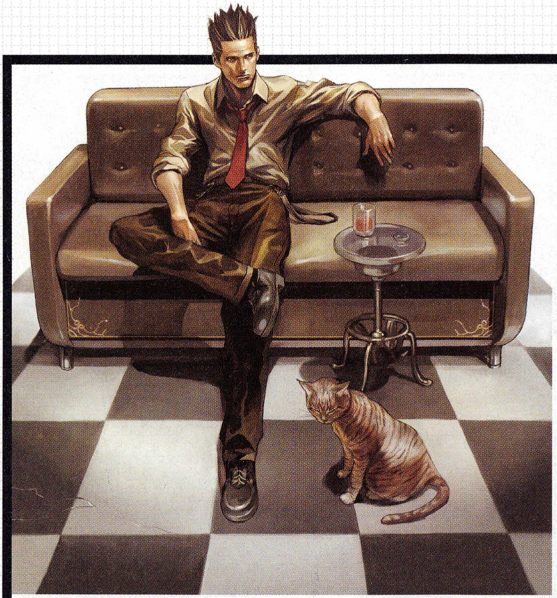
>THE MUNCHABLES

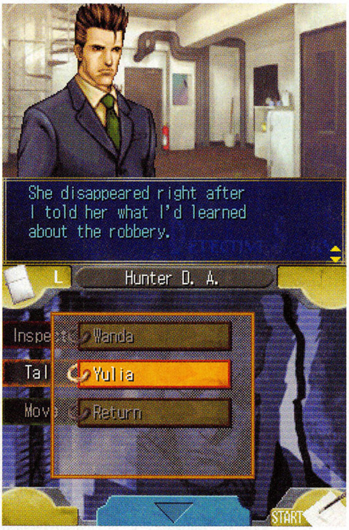
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

Your goal in The Munchables is to eat, eat, and eat some more. The more you eat, the bigger you get, which allows you to eat even bigger things. (If anything, it's similar to another Namco Bandai game, Katamari Damacy for PlayStation 2.) Specifically, your goal as one of the two Munchables—Chomper or Munchy—is to dine on the fruit- and vegetable-esque Tabemon monsters, space pirates who have invaded your home planet of Star Ving to steal your Legendary Orbs. Devouring your enemies is fairly simple: move around with the Control Stick, jump by lifting the Wii Remote, lock onto enemies with Z, and gobble stuff up with A. Sometimes you'll come across a larger, higher-level opponent; you can consume more space pirates to level yourself up (evolving as you do so) or you can try attacking your foe and breaking him up into smaller, easier-to-eat chunks by pressing B. This latter approach proves especially important when facing the game's many bosses, such as the not-so-jolly green Brocco-Lee. **—JUSTIN C.**



[Above] You can eat so much and get so big that enemies start to look like colorful ants.




She disappeared right after I told her what I'd learned about the robbery.

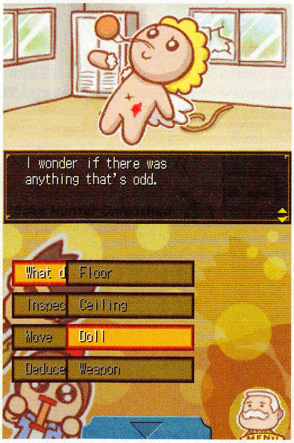
Hunter D. A.
Inspe
Tal
Move
Wanda
Yulia
Return
START

Thanks for the Memories

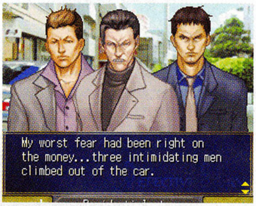
> JAKE HUNTER DETECTIVE STORY: MEMORIES OF THE PAST

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **WORKJAM** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

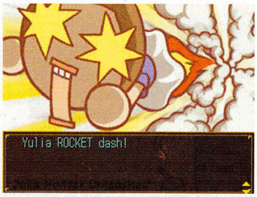
A detective's work is never done. That's certainly true for hard-boiled private eye Jake Hunter, who's tasked with solving more than six mysterious cases in Jake Hunter Detective Story: Memories of the Past. Using a text-based interface, you'll put your sleuthing skills to the test to dig up clues, talk to suspects, visit various locales, and answer the occasional riddle in three cases repurposed from the first Jake Hunter game (now with significantly enhanced localizations that add extra layers of personality), plus three new investigations. In the As Time Goes By and The Red-Eyed Tiger episodes, Jake will deal with art theft, dysfunctional families, casino heists, and more; in the Memories of the Past episode, you'll find yourself in the middle of a massive conspiracy that ties the other five investigations together and puts you in the shoes of multiple playable characters, including a hapless slacker who's in the wrong place at the wrong time. Additionally, the game features numerous unlockable bonuses and five bite-sized Jake Hunter Unleashed stories, which offer a change of pace with chibi-style graphics, zany music, and a lighthearted attitude. **—CHRIS H.**

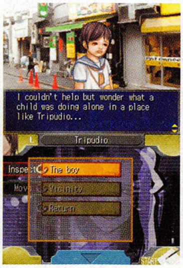

I wonder if there was anything that's odd.

What d
Inspec
Move
Deduce
Floor
Ceiling
Doll
Weapon
MENU

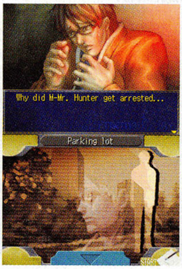

My worst fear had been right on the money...three intimidating men climbed out of the car.

[Left, Below] The cute Jake Hunter Unleashed stories are far from typical detective fare.

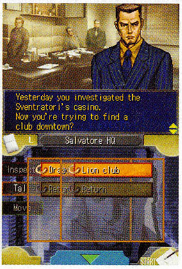

Yulia ROCKET dash!


I couldn't help but wonder what a child was doing alone in a place like Tripudio...

Tripudio
Inspect
Move
The boy
Vicinity
Return
START


Why did M-Mr. Hunter get arrested...

Parking lot
START


Yesterday you investigated the Sventratori's casino.
Now you're trying to find a club downtown?

Salvatore HQ
Inspe
Tal
Move
Lion club
Return
START

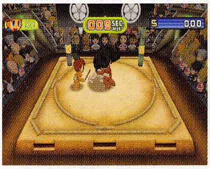
All Work and All Play

>HELP WANTED

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **HUDSON**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

When Nintendo began its storied Game Counselor service, the company's want ad asked, "How would you like to play video games for a living?" In Hudson's Help Wanted, the question is something like, "How would you like to play video games to save the world?" Help Wanted amounts to 50 job-related minigames. One occupation is (fittingly) game master. The others run the employment gamut. As a supermarket clerk, you rotate and scan grocery items. In the role of a pit-crew member, you twist the Wii Remote to tighten tire bolts on a race car. If you'd rather be behind the wheel, the stunt-person job is for you; it lets you tilt the Remote to steer as you avoid obstacles on the way to a harrowing jump. Other jobs include art restorer, astronaut, newscaster, and infomercial assistant. Sadly, you don't get to sell shammies, but you do get to keep a meteor from annihilating humankind by purchasing defensive items with your earnings. **—GEORGE S.**

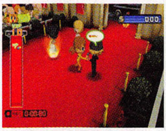
057 SEC left
$ 1.30
New Record!



[Above] Who needs a college education when you can get a job being almost crushed by sumo wrestlers?

060 SEC left
$ 0.00

038 SEC left
$ 17.65
New Record!

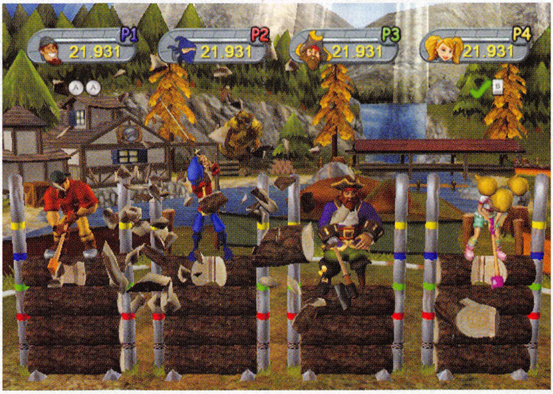


Got Wood?

>GO PLAY: LUMBERJACKS

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **PANIC BUTTON** • RELEASE: **MAY 2009**

Have you ever wanted to be a burly lumberjack? No? Regardless, you'll get a chance in Go Play: Lumberjacks, the first game in Majesco's uniquely themed, motion-controlled, minigame-based Go Play product line. Go Play: Lumberjacks challenges you to compete against friends or CPU-controlled opponents in 16 manly minigames across five categories: sawing, chopping, climbing, axe throwing, and water events. The minigames test your woodcutting prowess in a variety of different ways. In Solo Cross, for example, you simply move the Wii Remote back and forth like a saw as fast as you can; in Pole Climb you shake the Remote to climb while pushing the Control Pad to dodge falling obstacles; and in Limb Cut you press the correct buttons to saw off branches as they pass you, similar to a rhythm game. Lumberjacks also features a variety of wacky characters, ranging from traditional lumberjacks to pirates to ninjas (yes, pirates vs. ninjas), and you can unlock your Miis as playable characters as well. Sadly, there's no caber-tossing minigame, but you can't have everything. **—CHRIS H.**



P1 425
P2 395
P3 195
P4 145
1ST
2ND
3RD
4TH
+25
+50

Never before has a game promoted such senseless brutality against innocent logs.

P1 30.609
P2 30.609
P3 30.609
P4 30.609
1ST
3RD
2ND
4TH

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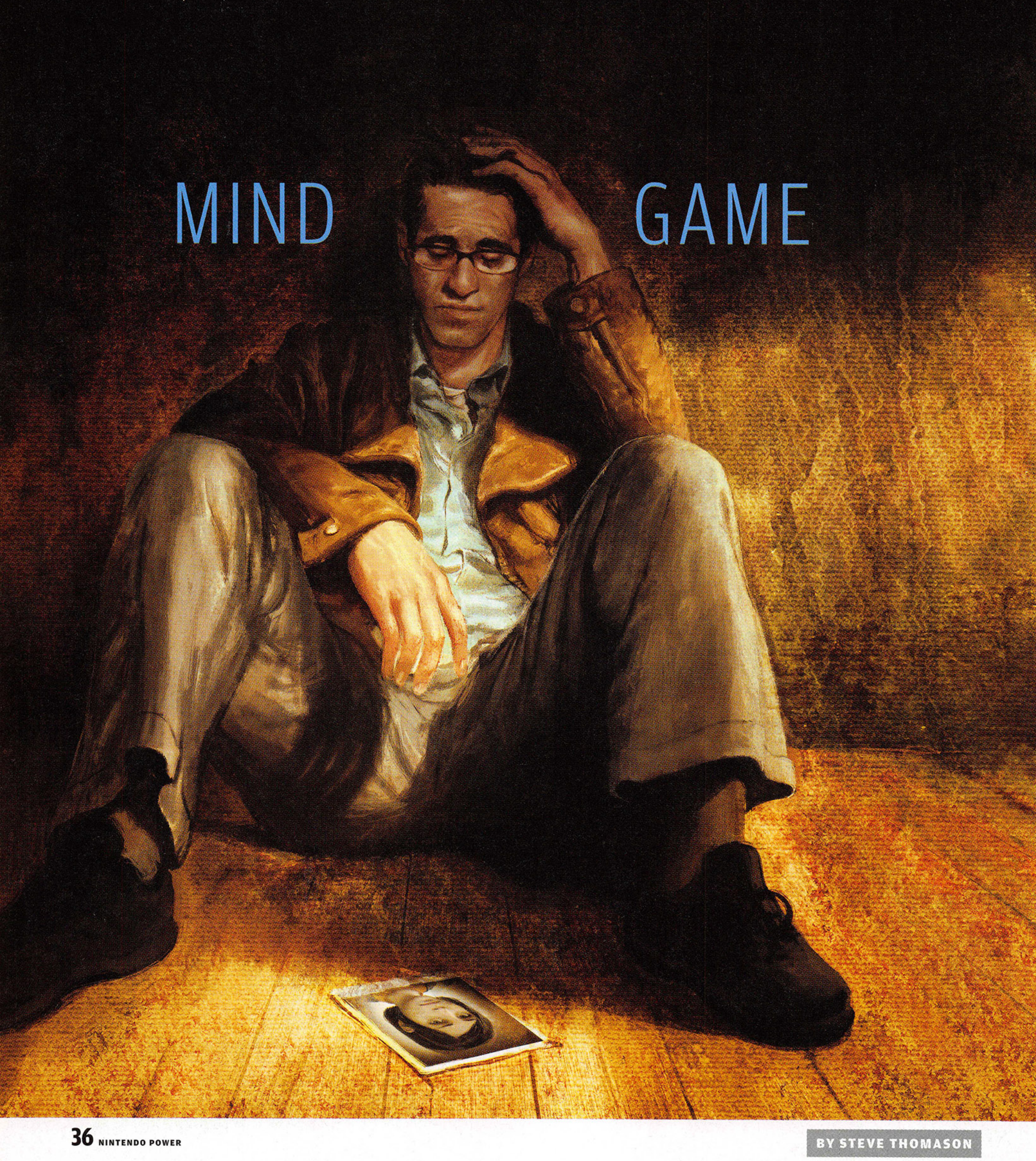
THE SCARIEST GAME OF ALL TIME GETS EVEN SCARIER WITH SILENT HILL: SHATTERED MEMORIES.

MIND GAME



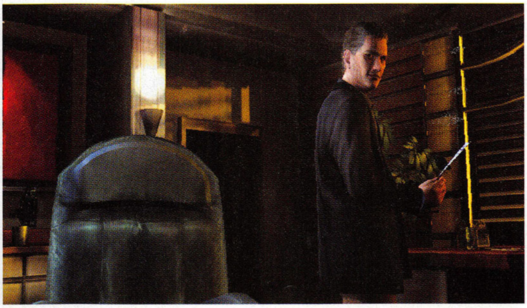
BY STEVE THOMASON

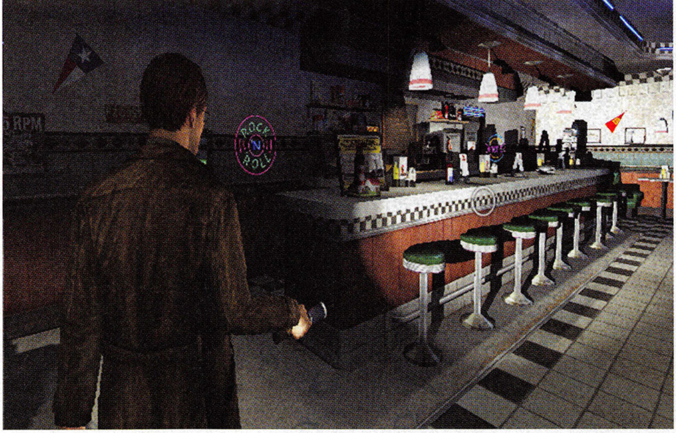
As we sit down for an exclusive first look at Silent Hill's Wii debut, we're not quite sure what to expect. Previous discussions with Konami suggested a brand-new game, but then we heard rumblings of a return to the original, with players once again leading protagonist Harry Mason on a search for his missing daughter. As it turns out, both are true. "This is a reimagining of the first Silent Hill," explains producer Tomm Hulett. "It's not a remake or a port. That's an important distinction. It really feels like a new game. Think of it like what they did with *Battlestar Galactica*. The characters play different roles, things don't necessarily happen in the same order, and the story is taken in lots of new directions. You still play as Harry Mason, you're still looking for your daughter, and you'll see familiar elements, but they're all twisted to betray your expectations."

Hulett's point is apparent right off the bat. Our demo begins much like the original game: Harry crashes his car and awakens to find that his young daughter, Cheryl, has disappeared. But the accident takes place on one of Silent Hill's residential streets rather than on the highway outside of town. Plus, there's no sign of Cybil, the police officer who assists Harry at the beginning of the PlayStation version. Those are the sorts of changes that only diehard fans will recognize, though. What follows is a dramatic departure that signifies just how radically developer Climax (who previously worked on Silent Hill: Origins for PSP) hopes to evolve this survival-horror classic. Cut to a psychiatric office, where a new character named Dr. K asks us to fill out a personality profile. Topics include our ability to make friends easily, whether we prefer abstract ideas, and additional inquiries of a more adult nature. (The game will be rated Mature, obviously.) This exercise sets the groundwork for one of Shattered Memories' most significant and intriguing additions—your answers actually affect how the game unfolds. And it doesn't end there. The game "watches" you constantly, and your behavior throughout can determine when you'll meet certain characters, which scenes you'll witness, and a variety of other factors that we'll get to momentarily. "In Silent Hill games, the town always gets inside the protagonist's head," says Hulett. "But now, it's getting inside *your* head."

MAN ABOUT TOWN

Back to Harry, and our first taste of what it will be like to explore Silent Hill on Wii. You steer the hero's movements the old-fashioned way, via the Control Stick, but you use the Wii Remote to aim his flashlight. This is one of the things we dreamed about when the Wii controller was first unveiled, and it's every bit as effective as we imagined. What's more, the developers are making a concerted effort to keep you as immersed in the experience as possible. When you want to check on something in





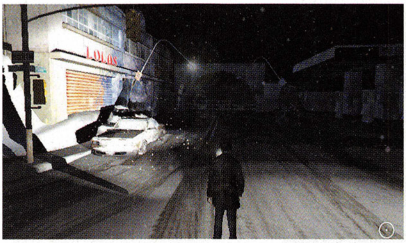
the environment, for example, you simply fix your view on it rather than press a button, and instead of text appearing onscreen, Harry comments vocally. "Something we talk about a lot, obviously, is how to make things scary," explains Hulett. "And one way is to remove the idea that you're connected to a game. We want people to feel like they're interacting directly with Silent Hill." Further contributing to that cause are streaming environments that completely eliminate load times.

As we stroll through Silent Hill's eerily quiet streets, we soon come to a pair of shops: Teresa's used-clothing store and the Clear Picture video store. We choose to investigate the latter, which Hulett notes is one of the decisions that could influence future events. Before heading inside, we're able to crack the door open a little bit and peer into the room with our flashlight. Since you never know what may lurk beyond any given door in Silent Hill, this new feature is certainly welcome (and provides an extra layer of tension). Aside from looking like they haven't been cleaned in about five years, Clear Picture's confines don't seem to harbor any danger. Once inside, our search of the establishment doesn't turn up anything particularly noteworthy, but we do take a moment to appreciate the stunning light and shadow effects produced by Harry's flashlight. Shattered Memories is one fine-looking game; screenshots don't entirely do it justice.

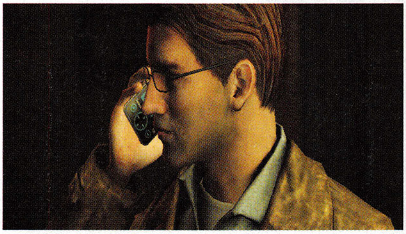
After departing Clear Picture through the rear exit, we come to a padlocked gate and a rudimentary example of the game's puzzles. In the bed of a nearby truck are three cans, each of which we can pick up and shake via the Wii Remote. One of them produces a rattling sound from the controller's speaker, and when we turn the can upside down, a key falls out. "We're using the Wii Remote to interact directly with the environment, so the puzzles are all based around that idea," says Hulett. "You're not just hitting buttons to choose things." He also notes that the solution to a puzzle is always in the immediate vicinity, and assures us there's a lot less backtracking than in previous games. "We haven't placed keys five rooms back that you may have missed," promises the producer. (Longtime fans of the series will also be delighted to learn that there's a way through every locked door; no more checking dozens of entrances only to find that 90% of them are permanently barred shut.)

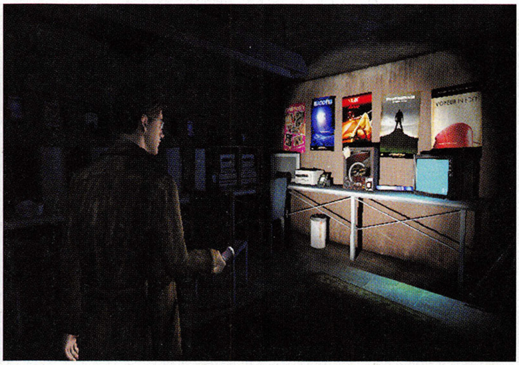
Beyond the gate lies a diner that will look familiar to anyone who's played the original Silent Hill. The eatery is closed for the evening, however, and according to Hulett, that's a result of the choices we've made thus far. Had we perhaps taken an alternate route or given different answers on the personality profile, we could have entered the diner and met Cybil. (We take it back! Abstract ideas are the bee's knees!) At least we'll be able to drown our sorrows; the decisions we've made means the watering hole across the street *is* open for business.

Inside, Harry asks the friendly barkeep—another brand-new character—if she's seen Cheryl. Up until now, we'd assumed this was our hero's first visit to Silent Hill, as it was in the original version. But as he takes out his wallet to show the pub's owner a photograph of Cheryl, the eagle-eyed woman notices Harry's address on his driver's license. It turns out the Masons live just a few blocks down the road. Consider our expectations officially betrayed. This comes as a surprise to Harry, as well, who



[Above] Silent Hill's titular burg begins its transition to a nightmare world completely encased in ice. That's your cue to run.





MAD MAESTRO

Two critical elements of Silent Hill's potent atmosphere have always been its haunting music and discordant audio effects. The man responsible for the series' unique sound is Akira Yamaoka, and he'll be contributing his talents to Shattered Memories. We had the opportunity to chat with Yamaoka about how he approaches his work, his sources of inspiration, and what keeps him up at night.

NINTENDO POWER The Silent Hill series has always had a very distinctive sound. How did you arrive at that? What were some of your sources of inspiration?

AKIRA YAMAOKA I always wanted to propose a new music style that did not exist anywhere in the world of game music. I wanted to deconstruct game music, see what remained, and create something different. The music for any form of entertainment should not have set formats, but creators tend to stick to those anyway. It's just because it's easier that way. Based on the scenes [in Silent Hill, for example], picking an existing style of music like classic, kind of sad music, would have been much easier. Game music was like that in the past. It usually starts with lots of little bitsounds, and therefore a lot of it sounds similar and could all be categorized into the "game music" genre. Therefore, with Silent Hill, I wanted to deny and forget about the genre and recreate game music. I thought about what would be a new, different style of game music. That's how Silent Hill's music was created.

Are you trying anything new or different with the music for Shattered Memories?

I am still in the process of trial and error. Since we are making a Wii version for the first time in the series, I would like to try something different.

How did the scenario or characters of the Wii title influence your compositions for the game?

The scenario and characters do influence my compositions. The Silent Hill titles dig down deep into people's psyche. You might not notice the differences in the music at first, but as you continue to play the game and listen to the music closely, you will feel the differences. I want everyone to feel the deep psyche of the sound.

How do you get yourself in the right mood or frame of mind to write a piece of music for Silent Hill?

I don't really get into any sort of mood before writing music for Silent Hill. I just try to stay calm and think normally. Writing music for this series is very special to me because it just comes naturally, and I don't need to get into some special mindset to write. For other works, I usually need to get some sort of inspiration before I can start writing.

What do you think the music brings to the Silent Hill experience? What do you try to accomplish with your soundtracks?

Music is an essential element to all kinds of entertainment, not just horror. When viewing entertainment, we are influenced by both what we see and what we hear. This combination of sight and sound is what makes entertainment fun, and I wanted to pursue this with the Silent Hill franchise. What you see and what you hear should portray the mood we are trying to relay during gameplay, and that's what I'm trying to accomplish. I want this combination of sight and sound to give the user a powerful emotional experience. Therefore, I don't try to create Silent Hill music with just sounds. I carefully study the visuals of the game when writing my music.

What's the secret behind using music or sound to create a heightened sense of fear?

Actually, there are many secrets for that. First and foremost is "irregularity." People are analog creatures, but at the same time, they like and feel comfortable with the digital sense. In our daily lives, we wake up in the morning, work, eat, and sleep. Everybody has a routine. When something irregular like an accident happens, the routine breaks and the sense of rhythm starts to change. People live every day with expectations of what's going to happen next. When things don't happen as we expected, or when the rhythm breaks, we start to get very nervous. One of the horrors in Silent Hill, "anxiety," is often created by such irregularity. For example, the sound the player is listening to suddenly changes, the noise starts all of a sudden, and the rhythm starts to get irregular. I often break the regular rhythm and create the sound that players don't expect to hear. In short, I betray the users' expectations. This is one of the most important methods of creating sound for Silent Hill.

For some of the earlier Silent Hill titles, you were actually involved in the game design. Why have you decided to step back from taking a larger creative role?

There are various reasons for that. [Laughs] I am thinking about taking a creative role again some day. I would like to contribute to the creative side as a master of horror or Japanese horror.

Which Silent Hill title is your personal favorite thus far? And which is your favorite just in terms of the music?

My favorite is Silent Hill 2. Its theme was "Crime and Punishment," and the feel was completely different from that of other games. It was a special title to me because it was unique. Originality is very important to me. Even just as far as the music is concerned, my favorite is Silent Hill 2. I like the first Silent Hill, but I think I was too free to make anything in that one. I feel that I was able to fully demonstrate my creativity and narrow my focus in Silent Hill 2.

Generally speaking, what are some of your personal musical influences?

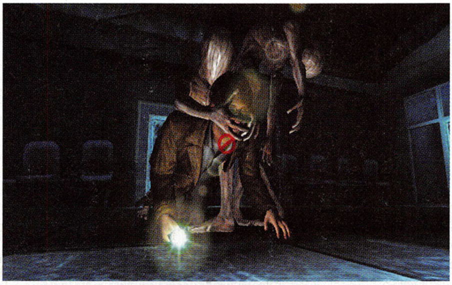
'80s European music. It was a movement when I was a junior-high student. New wave and punk rock were very powerful at that time. I loved the mellifluous, aesthetic feel of the European music. I was strongly influenced by not only the music, but the culture and entertainment of that time. The whole thing, including the music and the visual images, influenced me. If I were influenced just by the music, I would not be making Silent Hill-type music. I would probably be fixated on music genres and be making very boring music. I think every kind of entertainment should stimulate not only one sense, but all the senses. I was influenced by the '80s European culture and entertainment because it was exactly like that.

What songs are getting the most play on your MP3 player lately?

I have my iPod with me now. Let me check. [Laughs] It seems I have been listening to The Rasmus, Museo Rosenbach, Mogwai, Last Laugh, Ignition Technician, HIM, and Goldfrapp.

What is your greatest fear?

Nothing. [Laughs] I am not afraid of anything. I just make my way no matter what happens in my life. Or maybe I should say that I'm too busy to fear anything. I'm not just saying this to be cool! [Laughs]



Your personality profile will determine the monsters' appearance. In keeping with series tradition, it also modifies how the game's ending unfolds.

seems to be suffering a bit of amnesia since the accident. (Perhaps his "shattered memories" are meant to reflect what returning players will feel with this skewed version of a familiar experience?)

Just as we're starting to feel sufficiently uncomfortable, the Wii Remote rings and nearly scares us out of our seats. That's our introduction to Harry's cell phone, the one and only tool at your disposal. You can use it to take pictures, access a map (on which you can scribble notes), and, of course, make phone calls. There's no response when we answer this particular call, so we hang up and try the first thing that comes to mind: dial 911. An emergency dispatcher actually picks up, her voice emanating from the Wii Remote speaker, but she can't hear Harry and eventually hangs up. Looks like we're on our own.

The shortest route to the Mason residence is back the way we came, so we retrace our steps to the video store. When we pass through Clear Picture this time,

A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Shattered Memories marks the franchise's Nintendo-platform debut outside of Japan. (A bizarre Game Boy Advance text adventure called Silent Hill Play Novel was released only in that country.) Here's a brief history of the series in case you've yet to get acquainted with gaming's most disturbing township. Warning: spoilers ahead.

Silent Hill

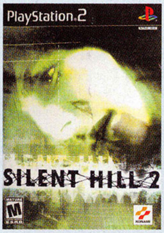
PLAYSTATION, 1999

Before the original Silent Hill, most horror titles relied on visceral scares: startling you with things jumping through windows and the like. But Konami's title was more about the psychological side of fear, creating an unsettling atmosphere that gradually crawled under your skin. It starred Harry Mason, whose daughter disappears after a car crash on their way to the sleepy resort town. While searching for her, Harry discovers that his little girl is in fact the reincarnation of Alessa Gillespie, a girl with strange powers who was sacrificed by her mother some years ago in an effort to resurrect a dark god. If you finish with the good ending, Harry escapes the town with a newborn incarnation of his daughter.

Silent Hill 2

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX, 2001

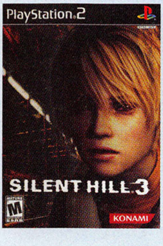
The second installment of the series delved even deeper into the psychological aspect; namely the connection between the town and the protagonist's psyche. It begins when James Sunderland receives a letter from his deceased wife asking him to come to Silent Hill, where the couple enjoyed a memorable vacation before her untimely death. As he desperately searches the town for clues regarding the letter's origin, James repeatedly encounters a lumbering demon known as Pyramid Head, widely considered the franchise's most terrifying creation. It's eventually revealed that Pyramid Head is a symbol of James's own guilt.



Silent Hill 3

PLAYSTATION 2, 2003

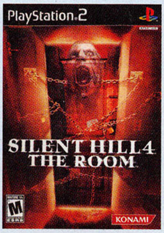
Voted the best game in the series by the majority of the NP staff, Silent Hill 3 not only continued to scare the bejeezus out of us, but also looked amazing and told an immensely satisfying story. While hanging out at the mall, 17-year-old protagonist Heather is confronted by a cultist from Silent Hill named Claudia. Heather manages to escape her stalker, but when she returns home she finds her father murdered. In one of the most memorable surprises in video game history, the deceased man turns out to be none other than Harry Mason, which means Heather is the reincarnation of Alessa Gillespie. Claudia was friends with Alessa growing up, and is determined to extract her old playmate from our heroine. The two face off in Silent Hill, where Heather expels Alessa's influence and defeats Claudia.



Silent Hill 4: The Room

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX, 2004

Originally conceived as a new property unrelated to Silent Hill, The Room was a radical departure for the franchise that ultimately proved disappointing. A large portion of the game was set in protagonist Henry Townshend's apartment, viewed from a first-person perspective. Henry wakes up one day to discover that the door to his apartment has been chained shut from the inside, and that his only escape is through a hole in the bathroom, which leads him to various locations throughout Silent Hill (where the game switches to a traditional third-person perspective). It was a novel idea, but poor pacing and too much emphasis on combat dragged things down.

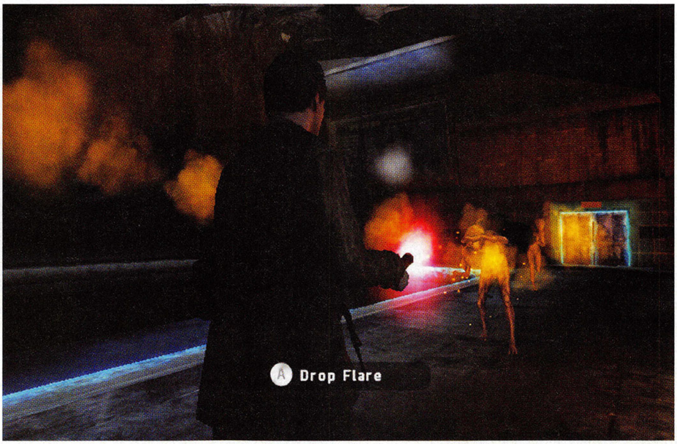


Silent Hill Origins

PSP, 2007

The Climax team currently working on Shattered Memories is the same group responsible for Origins, the first Silent Hill title ever developed outside Konami's internal studios. It explores the events leading up to the sacrifice of Alessa Gillespie through the eyes of Travis Grady, a lonely trucker who gets stranded in Silent Hill. Throughout the game, Travis battles the personal demons surrounding his parents' death while avoiding a hulking terror known as The Butcher. By and large, Origins did the series proud, which is part of the reason we're optimistic about Shattered Memories.

Harry's phone starts making that disquieting static sound that usually portends less-than-cheery developments in the Silent Hill universe. (And it's even more unnerving when it comes from the palm of your hand rather than the television.) The noise gets louder as we head deeper into the store, until suddenly a monitor flickers on by itself and displays some sort of creepy wedding video. "This sort of takes the place of the notes you'd find in previous games," chimes in Hulett. Yes, in a particularly fiendish move, the developers are actually goading you into following the static to its source. Only by doing so will you discover certain clues, as well as revelations regarding the story and background of Silent Hill. These demonic memoranda won't always simply appear in front of you, however; sometimes you'll need to take a photo to unveil a message invisible to the naked eye, or your hint may come in the form of a voicemail. Whatever the case, "You'll never have to stop and read a text box," says Hulett. "Like I said, we want everything to be more organic so you're always in the game."

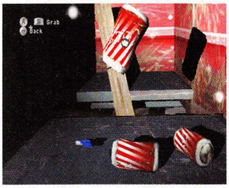


Before leaving the video store, we notice that the answering machine is blinking. We hit the play button, and a male voice launches into a furious tirade about how Clear Picture's management will pay with their lives for accidentally deleting his wedding video. (They were supposed to transfer it from VHS to DVD.) Afterward, Konami public relations manager Jay Boor comments that when he went through the demo yesterday, he heard a completely different message from a female voice. "The game changes in all kinds of ways," confirms Hulett. "It's not just choosing the good path or the bad path, or seeing different scenes when you come to a certain crossroads. It's a lot of tiny, minute things." Another example is that certain characters might dress differently. As Hulett explains, "The psychology profile stuff really is integrated wholly into the game. It creates a unique experience for each player. You can have 10 people play, and all of them will see different things."

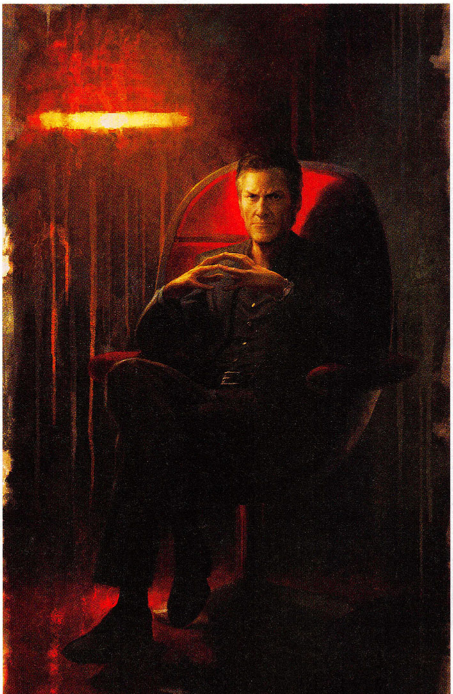
RUNNING FROM YOUR FEARS

Back outside the world's shadiest video store, we get another phone call. It's Cheryl, panic in her voice as she cries, "You can't fight them, daddy. Run!" At that point, air-raid sirens begin to blare as our surroundings undergo a disturbing metamorphosis. Streetlights go dark and begin to twist unnaturally, while a thick sheet of ice envelops the entire town. As readers who have visited Silent Hill previously well know, the supernatural burg can transform into a nightmare world that manifests its protagonist's most deep-seated fears. The reason for the ice theme remains a mystery for now, but we have more pressing matters to attend to: namely some fast-approaching monstrosities.

[Below] One of these cans has a key inside; shake them to find it.



Cheryl was right—we literally cannot fight these creatures, because combat has been completely stripped away from Shattered Memories (no big loss considering how clunky it's been in previous installments). Instead, you have no choice but to flee, which proves considerably more terrifying. "For the nightmare world, the focus is on escape and evasion," describes Hulett. "We don't want the player to feel empowered; we want them to feel helpless. Your only weapons are your mind and your cell phone." A waypoint is highlighted on the map, and you have to figure out how to get there while the monsters hunt you down. Once they spot you, the chase is on. Holding the Z Button makes Harry get the lead out, and during the getaway, you can barge through doors, climb over fences, jump through



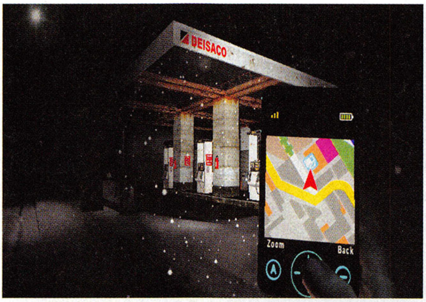
ROCK 'N' ROLL
CUSTOMERS
POLICE

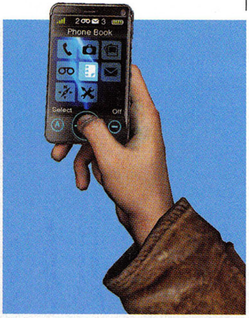
windows, and so on. You can even barricade doors behind you with a bookshelf or whatever else might be handy. The static gets louder as the monsters close in, and while Harry is running, you can look back over his shoulder. Watching these abominations leap over cars and crawl along the rooftops as they relentlessly pursue our hero had us on the edge of our seats.

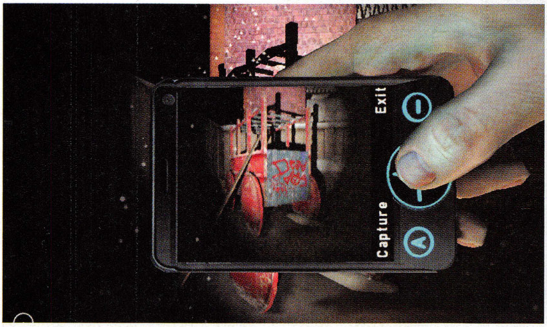
To be clear, these chase sequences aren't quick-time events; you have full control over Harry and can choose whichever path you see fit to his destination. For their part, don't expect the monsters to simply follow behind you. They'll take alternate routes to try to cut you off, and they'll use their numbers to flank you whenever possible. If they manage to grab Harry, you have to vigorously shake the Wii Remote and Nunchuk to break free before they freeze him to death. The guise of your adversaries, we should note, is another element that depends on your personality profile. The ones chasing us are blue, with freaky square heads that have a big hole where the face should be. "In all of the Silent Hill games, the main character's mind determines what he has to face," remarks Hulett. "In Shattered Memories, the same thing happens, but it's your mind." No matter what form they take, the creatures are not terribly fond of heat, and you'll occasionally come across flares that you can pick up to temporarily keep your pursuers at bay. You can carry the flare until it burns out, but in certain instances—like when you're running down a narrow corridor—the better strategy may be to drop the flare behind you.

By the time we reach our objective and Silent Hill returns to normal, we realize we haven't done a whole lot of breathing the last few minutes. That level of tension far outstrips what you get from bludgeoning a monster with a 2x4. Hulett concurs. "The reason we went with this system of escape and evade is that we really wanted to go back to the roots of survival-horror. Silent Hill is one of the genre's flagship titles, and we really think horror games as a whole right now focus a lot on action. Take Resident Evil 4. It's a great game, but it's primarily about shooting monsters with big guns. You're really empowered, which means you're not afraid. So we really see those as action-horror games, and we want Silent Hill to be survival-horror. It's about surviving. You're never truly safe."

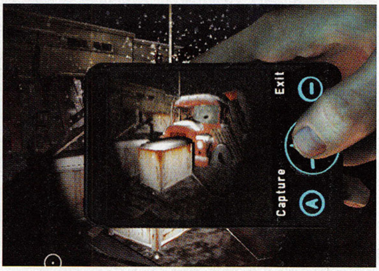
Shattered Memories is about as far removed from a typical remake as you can imagine. It takes inspiration from the original as the foundation for something that feels like a true evolution of the series. When dealing with a title of such legendary stature, the team would settle for nothing less. "We didn't go into this saying, 'Let's just make a good Silent Hill game,'" recalls Hulett. "Because the original Silent Hill really brought something new to the genre. And we want to do the same thing with Shattered Memories." We'll find out if they can pull it off later this year, but we're highly encouraged by what we've seen thus far. Now if you'll excuse us, we need to change our trousers.







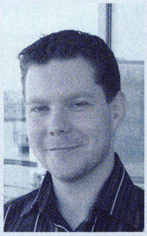
Want to mark a location on your map or take a photo of a creepy message invisible to the naked eye? There's an app for that.



SCREAM TEAM

Our greatest fear? Leaving any stone unturned when it comes to this promising new vision for survival-horror. Fortunately, lead designer Sam Barlow and game director Mark Simmons from Climax, along with producer Tomm Hulett from Konami, were kind enough to answer our questions.

MARK SIMMONS



SAM BARLOW

TOMM HULETT

NINTENDO POWER **What do you feel are the defining characteristics of the Silent Hill series, and how are those reflected in Shattered Memories?**

MARK SIMMONS Silent Hill has a distinct atmosphere that makes you feel really alone. And an art style where you can place an image from the game in front of someone and they'll say straight away, "that's from a Silent Hill game." You could do the same with the music, too. Akira's style is instantly recognizable in every game in the series. Above all, you can't call it a Silent Hill game unless its story delivers an emotional feeling that you just don't get in other games.

SAM BARLOW It's a series that stands apart as being artistically ambitious in a way that most videogames aren't. Silent Hill games want to leave players changed after playing them; it's not just about short-term thrills. Thanks to this, the series has always appealed to an audience outside of just core gamers because it told emotionally engaging stories about characters struggling with the scary stuff of human life rather than alien invasions or fantasy kingdoms.

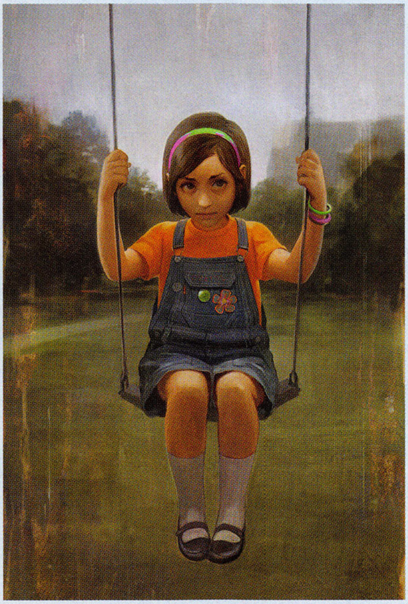
For Shattered Memories we wanted to reenergize the template, focusing on these aspects. How to use the Wii controls to enhance that atmosphere? How could we be more ambitious with the storytelling? How could we pull in a wider audience, an audience who would love to vacation in Silent Hill but might have been put off by some of the niche aspects of the survival-horror genre?

What was the motivation for a reimagining of the original game?

BARLOW We had some pretty big ideas about how to shake up the idea of a horror game. Wii seemed like the ideal place to do this—there's a large percentage of the audience there who don't have preconceptions of what a horror game should be, so they're not bogged down in genre expectations. And the Wii controls give us a great way to push the immersion and rework a lot of core mechanics.

TOMM HULETT The series has never had a major release on a Nintendo platform, so even though Wii is a perfect fit, a lot of its audience has never experienced Silent Hill before. At the same time, returning fans have seen the original storyline a number of times: the third game is heavily influenced by the first, the movie sort of retold the original story, and Climax most recently developed Origins—a prequel to the original game. So we had a conundrum: how do we make the game friendly to newcomers but interesting to longtime Silent Hill natives?

BARLOW The more we thought about it, the more it made sense to take the opportunity to start again, to reimagine the first game—hang our new ideas on the core story of Harry and his emotional quest for his daughter. For fans of the original, we could push a whole extra layer atop the game—playing off of their memories of the game. So this idea of a remake ended up being a great way of going back to first principles and rethinking the core tenets of a horror game. If someone were making Silent Hill 1 for the first time now, and if they didn't know what was expected of a horror game, what would they make?



SIMMONS The obvious thing was to use the Wii Remote in a way that put a flashlight in your hand, but other discussions about combat, the puzzles, the character control, and the storytelling devices led Sam and the design team to come up with some extremely innovative and brave ideas for the series. In fact, they were so brave that we had to step back and ask ourselves, "Do we have enough courage to push the series this far?" The more we thought about it, the more we were convinced that the ideas had the potential to reposition Silent Hill at the top of the genre.

What can video games bring to the horror genre that no other medium can, and how are you trying to tap into that with this game?

BARLOW Games have more time to build atmosphere, to draw the player in before they start to play their tricks. We let the player drive, so the suspense becomes calibrated to that specific person. Horror movies really draw on a huge amount of emotional empathy and projection from the audience, and games let us take that to the next step. You don't have to empathize because it's really *you* on screen. The terror is directly felt because it's *you* having to run for your life, it's *you* peeking through the doorway into darkness. A movie is like a roller coaster—you can close your eyes and it will be over sooner or later. You can't do that in a game. *You* have to move the game on; *you* have to push forward into the dark.

Then there's the thing that games can do, but which very few do: personalize the experience. This game will do that in a unique way. It doesn't ask you to make choices, it doesn't let you define your route through the game. *It* makes those choices—many choices—and it makes them in order to freak you out. It is trying to unsettle you—specifically *you*. A movie has to address a single, broad audience, but we can be dynamic and change in response to the player. We really want to get inside your head, then break it.

What lessons did the team learn from the development of Silent Hill: Origins, and how are those being applied to Shattered Memories?

BARLOW I think that game confirmed our love of the horror genre. We relished the opportunity to tell that kind of a story, despite the limitations of it being an origin title and our coming in on the project after development had started under a different team. It's a genre we all have a great passion for. We proved you can deliver atmosphere and that psychological tone on a platform nobody believed could do it. People said handhelds couldn't do horror, but Origins was *scary*. Technically we did things people had never seen before, or since, on a handheld.

SIMMONS Silent Hill fans find out that you're making a game for the series and worry that you're going to do it wrong if you're not "Team Silent." With Origins, we had to earn our wings, so to speak, and show we wouldn't screw it up—and now it's widely accepted as a true addition to the series.

BARLOW Then I think having done a faithful, straight Silent Hill game gave us the confidence to push things as far as we're doing in Shattered Memories. You've got to learn to paint properly before you do a Picasso, and making Origins let us grapple with the genre staples so that we could come away confident about which bits could be rethought and which ought to stay.

Can you talk a little bit about why you chose the ice aesthetic for the nightmare version of the town in this game?

HULETT One aspect of Silent Hill, revealed in the second game, is that everyone sees a different "other world" based on their psychology. Alessa's nightmare in the first game was a rusted, hellish world. In the sequel, Angela's nightmare is engulfed in flames. James's is a bit more about decay, and so on. I think later games forgot or ignored this detail, but it's an important one. Silent Hill ceases to be scary or interesting as soon as players know what to expect. When Silent Hill transitions to the nightmare, we want people to think, "What the heck is going on?!" every time—not "Here comes the rust again." I knew that if I worked on a Silent Hill game, I wanted to further develop this concept from Silent Hill 2.

BARLOW It all came together when we recalled one of Dr. Kaufmann's lines in the original, something like, "and it's snowing, *at this time of year.*" We loved the strangeness of this, of the weather being out of whack in the town. Soon after, it became a key part of our story and imagery. It was a natural progression to push from this weird blizzard to something more severe—a town fossilized in ice, a desolate world in stasis. Rusty brown corridors were a perfect fit for the PlayStation back in 1999, but we wanted to push the visuals much further.

> "I think some fans are going to flip out, but people [who] love Silent Hill because it's different and surprising are going to *really* enjoy the head trip." —SAM BARLOW

SIMMONS A funny part of the story here is a conversation I had with James, our lead render programmer. We were looking at the original game and admiring how this PlayStation game from 10 years ago had snowflakes that fell and landed realistically on the environment. James is the sort of person who, if he hears someone say, "That effect looks cool," will respond, "I bet I could do a better one." So I challenged him. Sure enough, he came back with an amazing snow effect with thousands and thousands of flakes falling realistically from the sky with each individual flake illuminated by the flashlight and every flake casting an individual shadow onto the environment. The first time you see the world freeze over into the nightmare, you will be amazed at what else he accomplished.

What were the key elements from the original game that you wanted to retain for Shattered Memories?

SIMMONS SH1's atmosphere was one of the strongest in the series. Even on the PlayStation, Konami's team executed an amazing feeling of loneliness and desolation, the fog, the dark, the flashlight, those amazing postindustrial tones from Yamaoka-san, and those long periods of the game where you where constantly on edge, never sure what horror was going to meet you round the next corner. That anticipation of what could happen was what made it a truly scary experience. We're putting a lot of effort into re-creating that sense of desperate loneliness and constant anticipation of what might happen next. In early focus tests, some players have got a little way into the game and there have been occasions where they just didn't want to go any further for fear of what might be round the next corner.

BARLOW We really wanted to re-create the "wow" factor that the flashlight had in 1999. I believe we've given Shattered Memories the best in-game flashlight ever.

HULETT The Silent Hill games are filled with a lot of horrific themes, but one very touching element is that this guy, Harry Mason, loves his daughter so much that he's willing to plunge repeatedly into this nightmare world to reach her and make sure she's safe. Obviously the gameplay is about escaping these nightmare segments, but it's also about a man repeatedly subjecting himself to hell in order to protect a loved one. That's one key theme of the original we definitely want to realize in Shattered Memories.

Can you give us an example of something from the original game that fans will recognize, but that has been altered or twisted in some new, unexpected way (a character, a particular event, etc.)?

SIMMONS Cybil.

HULETT The Balkan.

BARLOW I think some fans are going to flip out, but people [who] love Silent Hill because it's different and surprising are going to *really* enjoy the head-trip.

What was the inspiration for eschewing combat entirely in favor of the escape and evasion sequences?

SIMMONS When you look back at the survival-horror genre, it's pretty clear that the monster scares were built upon awkward controls, clumsy combat, and constantly being kept in a state of low health. Other genres had moved on [by] leaps and bounds, but the survival-horror genre continued to fall back on these unrefined elements of the gameplay because they "added to the fear." Recent attempts fix the controls, but only to focus entirely on action.

BARLOW We don't try to fix it; we pretend those "rules" never existed. If there were no horror games; if you sat down, watched a ton of horror movies, and then asked, "What is the action mechanic here?" you'd come up with what we did—the "action" is the chase. It's the classic nightmare. As a child you don't dream about beating on zombies with pipes. You dream of being chased, of being unable to escape. We wanted to make our nightmare sequences just that—nightmares. You are chased. You run, you try to put distance between you and the creatures, try to find your way out of the labyrinth.

SIMMONS We wanted to retain the sense that the protagonist is not superpowerful. He's a guy like you or me, and he's in a real horrifying situation. What would you do in that situation? Well, you'd run for your life.

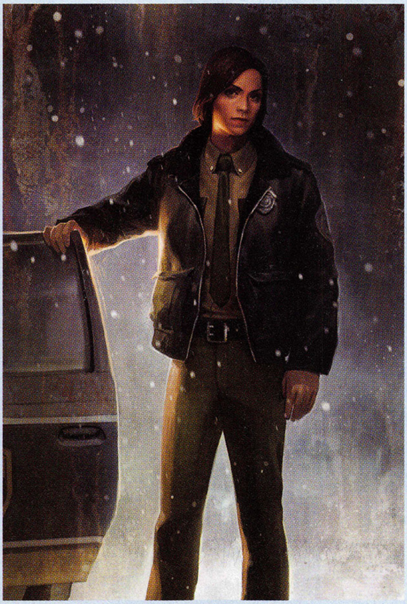
We love the psychological profile and how you're using that to really draw the player into Silent Hill. Where did that idea come from, and can you give a couple of examples of just how deeply it might affect each player's experience?

SIMMONS The original idea for the psychological profiling was Sam's, but it's taken an enormous organizational effort to bring it from its conception to get it working within the game. I've pulled in academics from universities, including professors and students of cyberpsychology to help us with the science. I've even sent some of the team for therapy to be analyzed themselves by professional psychologists.

BARLOW It's about trying to change the narrative in a way that isn't causal, isn't so pedestrian as being about a few isolated choices the player has consciously made. It's not about coming to a fork in the road and choosing the "good path" or the "evil path." The psychology stuff affects everything. Every piece of voice in the game changes. Every location changes in small or large ways. Story events pan out differently. The player gets their own tailored monster. Everyone will see a different game. And a lot of these differences are interesting differences. It's not, "I got the ice planet instead of the fire planet." It's, "That character was a real jerk" or "Why was she so nice to me?" or "Was she coming on to me?"

SIMMONS First-time players will likely go through completely unaware of the hundreds of changes being made all around them. They may just be more immersed in the story than they normally are and have an uncanny feeling that the game somehow seems to be in tune with them. As the story twists and turns, and when it concludes, they should get some real "wow" moments when they look back and think about the details. The characters they met, their personalities, their appearance, the places they visited, the atmosphere, the narrative, the many tiny details...all somehow in tune with what type of person they are.

> "As a child, you don't have dreams about beating on zombies with pipes. You dream of being chased, of being unable to escape. We wanted to make our nightmare sequences just that—nightmares." —SAM BARLOW



Akira Yamaoka is composing the soundtrack for the game, but have you consulted with him or other members of the original development team on any other aspect of Shattered Memories?

SIMMONS Yes, we've been in consultation with Yamaoka-san and some of the members of the original team on the bold plans for the game and our retelling of their original story.

BARLOW In return, they shared a lot of exclusive information, like stuff that wasn't in the game—what their original intentions were.

HULETT When I told Akira about some of the twists to our story, he was genuinely surprised. I think it took a moment for him to wrap his head around it.

BARLOW He's been a good litmus test. If we're freaking him out, then we're on to something!

SIMMONS We've also been working closely with him on the development of a new superdynamic music system that seamlessly introduces melodies, beats, atmosphere and instruments in and out to dynamically control the ebb and flow of the atmosphere within the music, feeding off your actions within the game to help create the desired level of tension within the user.

As fans of the series, we're hugely excited about Shattered Memories. If we ask really nicely, though, would you be willing to tease us with one additional tidbit that might whet our appetites even more?

SIMMONS We've thrown in a little something for fans of the dog from the basketball court in the original.

HULETT If anyone thinks they know what to expect, they're wrong.

BARLOW Silent Hill fans love puzzles, right? Here's one to think about: What do Elvis, Willie Nelson, the Pet Shop Boys, Sheryl Crow, and Brenda Lee have in common?

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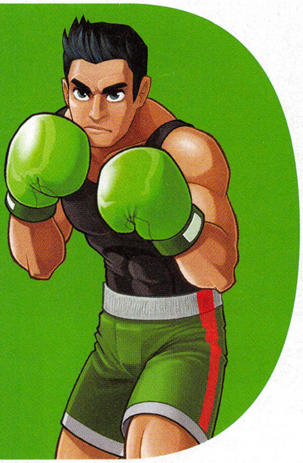
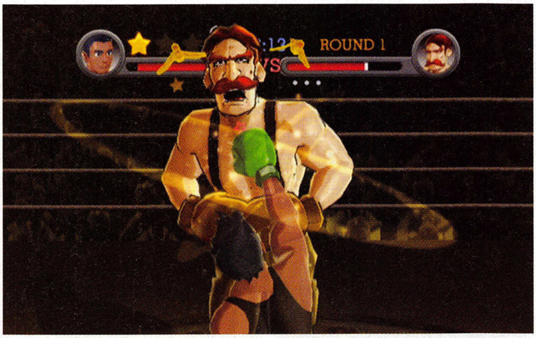
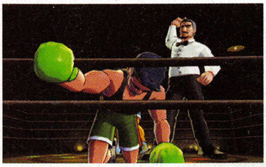
BY CHRIS SLATE!!

Little Mac is back in **Punch-Out!!**, a new take on the NES classic for Wii—and he's brought plenty of old friends.

COMEBACK KID



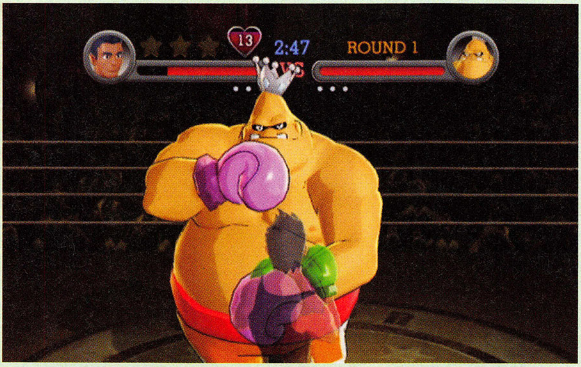




If you think the folks at Nintendo have gone soft with their brain-training, puppy-petting, and fitness games, they have something for you: a punch in the gut. The classic Punch-Out!! series is finally ready to go another round, this time on Wii, and the new version is every bit as awesome and brain-bashingly challenging as its predecessors. Trust us; by the time you reach the last few opponents, you'll be *begging* for some cuddly puppy time.

We're not complaining—we *love* our Punch-Out!! hard. It's that gotta-try-just-one-more-time quality that hooked us back in 1987 when Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! first rocked the NES. And if you're old enough to remember that version—or have played Punch-Out!! on Virtual Console—you're in for a fun trip down memory lane. The Wii installment brings back almost everything from the 8-bit classic, from its dodge-and-punch action to its outlandish opponents to Little Mac and his trainer, Doc Louis. The game mostly ignores the '94 Super NES sequel, Super Punch-Out!!, and focuses instead on replicating the magic that launched the series.

Before we go any further, I have a confession: I was concerned when I first heard that Nintendo had tapped Vancouver's Next Level Games to bring Punch-Out!! to Wii. Nothing against the developers at Next Level—I had a

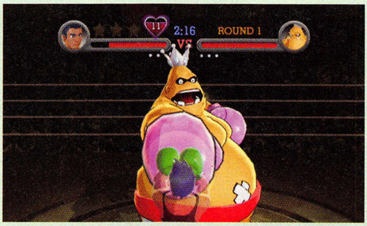


A Brand-New Way to Play

Punch-Out!! introduces motion controls to the series, and they couldn't be easier to use. If you'd still rather go old-school, however, the Wii Remote can be held sideways like an NES pad so you can punch away like it's 1987. But since motion control is the hot newness, let's take a look at how they are used to make Mac float like a butterfly and sting like a bee.

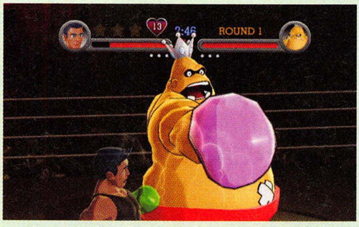
DEFENSE

Every good strategy in Punch-Out!! starts with defense—you won't get anywhere just by throwing random punches. The key is to find the best evasive move for each attack that your opponent throws at you, then follow it up with a flurry of your own punches before he can recover from his miss.

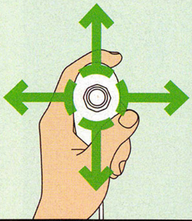


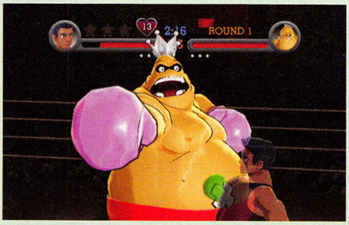
BLOCK (Press Up on the Control Stick) Lighter punches can be blocked by raising your gloves, which will temporarily stun your opponent and leave him open and vulnerable.

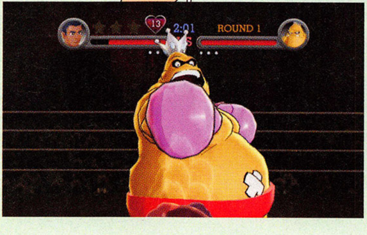
DODGE RIGHT (Press Right on the Control Stick) Most attacks can be dodged by going either left or right, but some require you to move in a specific direction.



LEFT DODGE (Press Left on the Control Stick) The most basic technique in Punch-Out!! is dodging a punch and quickly responding with blows of your own.







DUCK (Press Down on the Control Stick) Most punches that can be dodged can also be ducked, but some of the more powerful ones—such as certain hooks—can only be ducked.

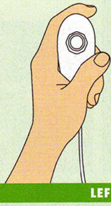
lot of fun with their Mario Strikers Charged—but when someone new takes the reins of a series that's near and dear to my heart, it's hard not to worry. But these guys nailed it. I've just beaten the game and I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt that this is as Punch-Out!! as a Punch-Out!! title gets. The fighting strategies are just as involving, the controls are just as sharp, the timing of punches and evasive moves is just as precise as in the original, and the top-notch character animation blows the old games out of the water. Not only do your opponents move very smoothly, but they are brought to life like never before with constantly changing facial expressions. It's incredibly satisfying to see your foe's eyes bulge out in terror when he misses a punch and realizes that he's left himself wide open to a counterattack.

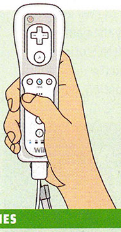
So, er, sorry to have ever doubted you, Next Level. Please make another one of these.

BOXING BASICS

If you who haven't played a previous Punch-Out!!, here's what you need to know: You're in for an all-out arcade-style game that's as far away from a sim as

OFFENSE

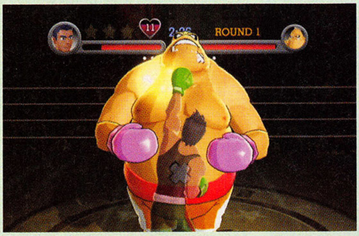




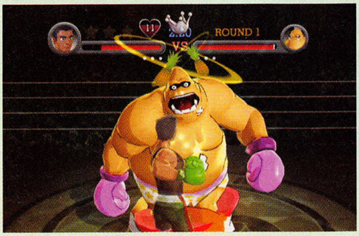
After dodging, ducking, or blocking an incoming attack, you've got a few different ways to hit back. Often times, your foe will only be open to either high or low punches, and you can get in more hits by alternating between your left and right fists.

LEFT PUNCHES

LEFT JAB (Hold Up on the Control Stick while swinging the Nunchuk)

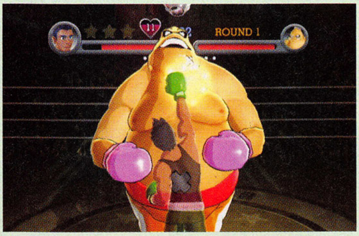


LEFT HOOK (Swing the Nunchuk without pressing the Control Stick)

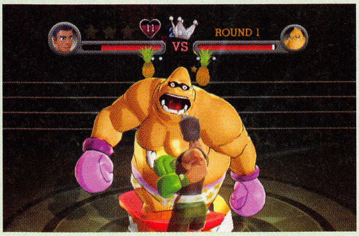


RIGHT PUNCHES

RIGHT JAB (Hold Up on the Control Stick while swinging the Wii Remote)



RIGHT HOOK (Swing the Wii Remote without pressing the Control Stick)

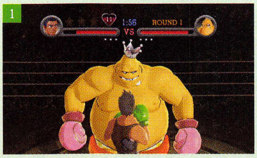


Star Punch

Punching an opponent at key moments will earn you a star, which enables Mac's devastating Star Punch uppercut. You can add even more power to the punch by collecting multiple stars (up to three), but you lose them all if you take a hit.

GETTING A STAR

1



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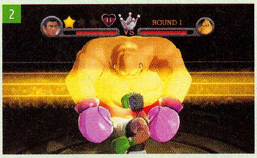
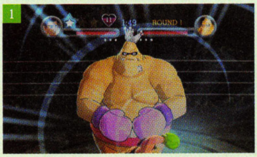


USING A STAR

1



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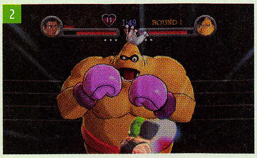

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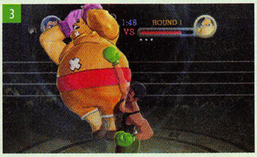
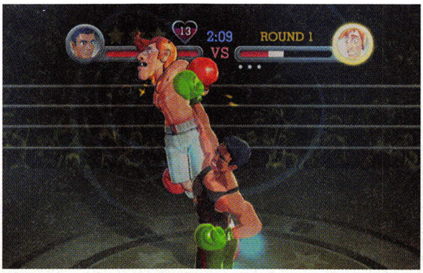
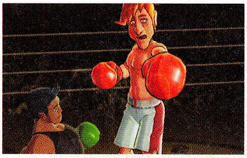


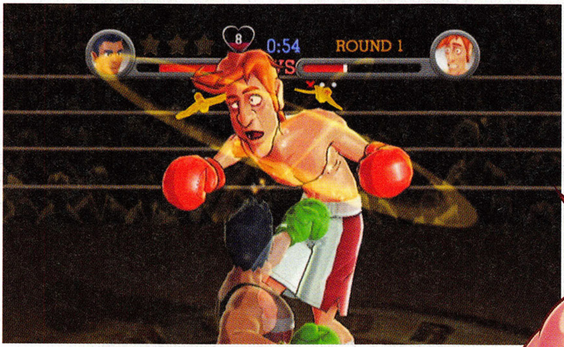
you can get. But it's not like other cartoony boxing games, such as last year's FaceBreaker. Both your character (Little Mac) and your opponent stand in place and never move around the ring. You can throw left or right punches high or low, dodge left or right, duck and block, and that's pretty much it. The action is so simple that you can hold the Wii Remote sideways and play the game just as you did the NES original (more on that, and the new motion-controls option, below). Punch-Out!! isn't about long lists of complex moves, but learning the patterns and timing used in each opponent's unique set of attacks and devising strategies to counter them. You need both quick reflexes and a sharp mind to be a serious contender.

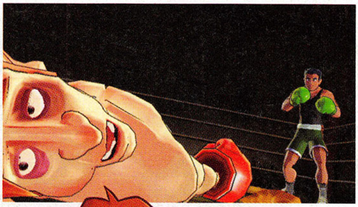
WVBA (World Video Boxing Association) bouts are just three rounds, and you win or lose by either a knockout (KO) or technical knockout (TKO, going to the mat three times in a single round). Your opponents are grouped into circuits of varying difficulty levels, and beating the champ in each wins you a title belt. By the way, unlike in the past games, losing never sends you back to the start of a circuit, so you can always



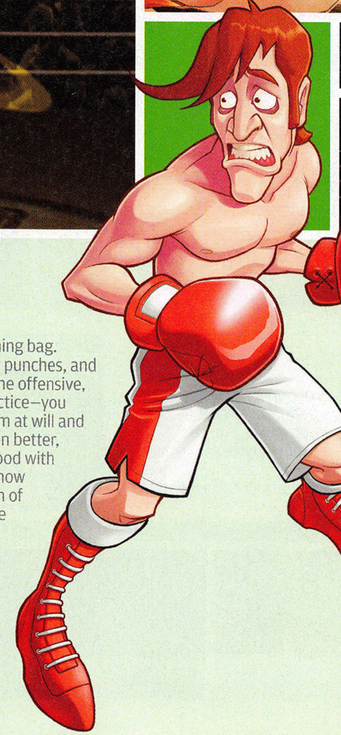


[Left] Glass Joe only throws a couple of punches, which are slow and easy to dodge. [Above] Joe makes it easy to earn stars and throw Star Punches.





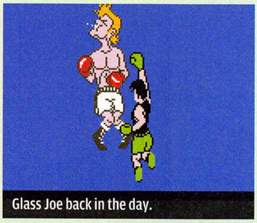
[Below] Before Little Mac. [Above] After Little Mac. Stay down, Joe!



MINOR-CIRCUIT PROFILE

GLASS JOE

As his 1-99 record shows, Glass Joe is little more than a punching bag. For the first minute or so of the fight he won't even throw any punches, and he'll take whatever you dish out. When he finally does go on the offensive, the wind-ups to his punches are so slow that—with a little practice—you can counterpunch him at will and easily earn stars. Even better, you can KO Joe for good with only five hits if you know the right combination of punches. Although he doesn't put up much of a fight, Glass Joe provides both new and old Punch-Out!! players with the chance to warm up their boxing skills.



Glass Joe back in the day.

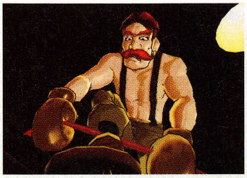
TALE OF THE TAPE

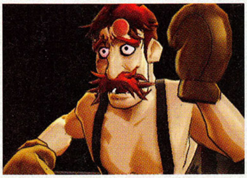
AGE	38
FROM	Paris, France
RECORD	1-99 (1 KO)
HEIGHT	5'10"
WEIGHT	110 lbs.

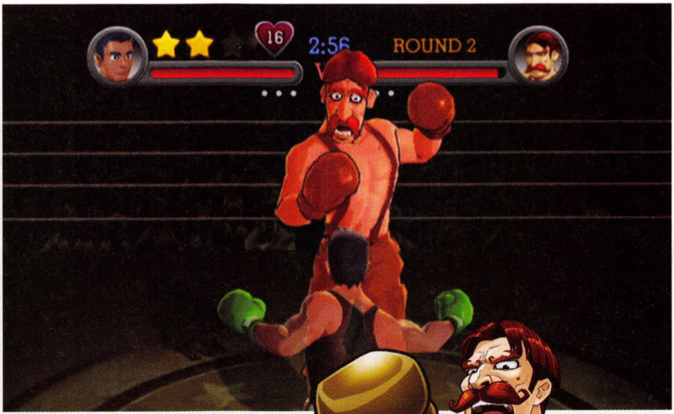
get an instant rematch against the guy who just clobbered you. And you now sometimes get a chance to catch yourself and remain standing after a blow that would normally put you on your back, which results in very cool, dramatic, cheer-worthy moments. Alas, Mario doesn't return as the ref (a princess must be missing somewhere).

MOVE IT, MAC

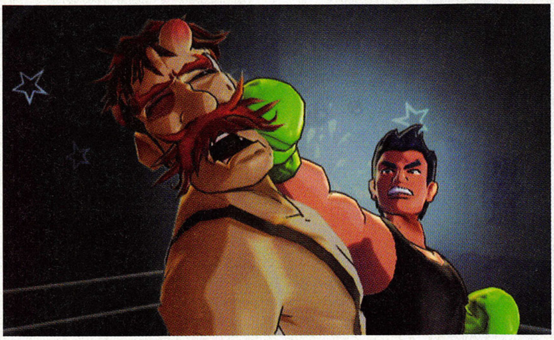
As I mentioned before, the game can be played with motion controls using the Wii Remote and Nunchuk. It works really well because, thankfully, the developers didn't take the Wii Sports Boxing approach and try to replicate one-to-one movement—that just wouldn't have been crisp enough for Punch-Out!!'s fast-paced action. Next Level's solution is beautifully simple: swing the Nunchuk for a left body blow, and swing the Remote for a right body blow. Holding up on the Nunchuk's Control Stick as you swing switches the punches to headshots, and you use the Control Stick without swings to dodge left or right, duck, and block. To stand up after getting knocked down or to build stamina back up while your opponent is on the mat, you simply

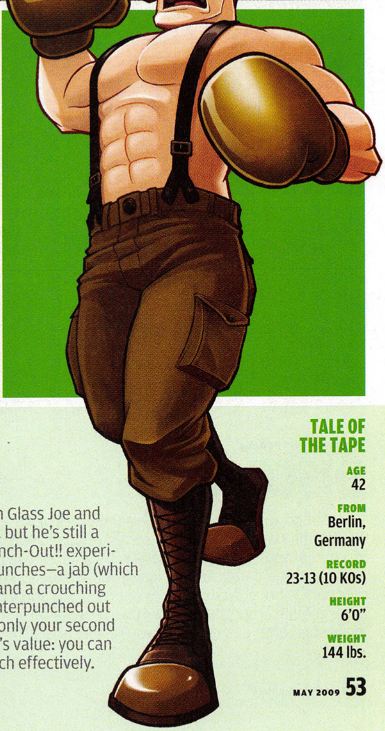


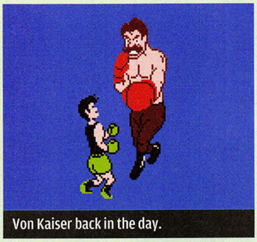




[Above] Fighters get bruised up as they take a beating. [Above right] When an opponent flashes red, that's the exact moment you can land a quick counterpunch and often earn a star.







Von Kaiser back in the day.

MINOR-CIRCUIT PROFILE

VON KAISER

Von Kaiser is much more active than Glass Joe and requires you to react a little quicker, but he's still a pushover for anyone with a little Punch-Out!! experience. He throws only two kinds of punches—a jab (which he telegraphs by shaking his head) and a crouching uppercut—and he can easily be counterpunched out of them both to earn easy stars. As only your second opponent in the game, that's Kaiser's value: you can use him to learn how to counterpunch effectively.

TALE OF THE TAPE

AGE
42

FROM
Berlin, Germany

RECORD
23-13 (10 KOs)

HEIGHT
6'0"

WEIGHT
144 lbs.

shake the Remote and Nunchuk. The A Button triggers Star Punches, which are superpowerful uppercuts that require a star—earned by hitting an opponent at a key moment—to use.

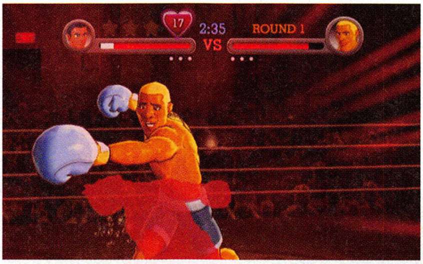
The other control option, in which the Remote is held sideways, is just as simple: the evasive maneuvers are mapped to the Control Pad, and the 1 and 2 Buttons throw left and right body blows, respectively; simultaneously holding Up on the Control Pad aims your punches high. Getting up from the mat and rebuilding stamina require rapid taps of the 1 and 2 Buttons. In both control schemes the Remote enhances the onscreen hits with a satisfying buzz.

BETTER THAN EVER

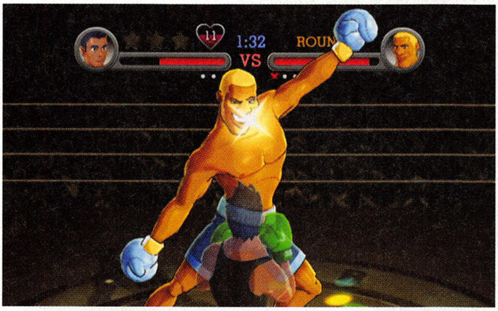
Thanks to the new 3-D graphical overhaul, this Punch-Out!! is much more cinematic than any before it; the camera zooms in and out to follow the action, and swings around to more dramatic angles during key moments, such as when a fighter is knocked down. The game's 13 opponents have also been improved with new attacks, and changes to their old ones. Classic strategies will help, but often won't work exactly as you remember, resulting in an experience that should feel both very familiar and brand-new to Punch-Out!! veterans. The game features revamped versions of the original NES tunes, and even slips in some of the classic 8-bit sound effects. While playing the game, it comes through loud and clear that the developers are big fans of the series and have worked hard to do it justice.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

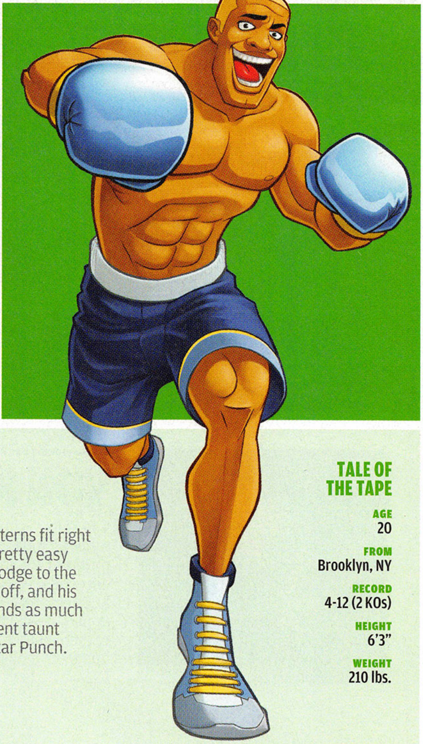
Thank goodness this series returned when it did; after Little Mac appeared as an Assist Trophy in Super Smash Bros. Brawl, we'd just about run out of patience waiting for a full-on sequel. Here at the Nintendo Power offices, the game brought work to a halt as everyone crowded around the TV to take turns slugging it out and working together at crafting the strategies needed to win each bout; it took us straight back to our 8-bit pugilistic youth. The game really makes you



[Above] Disco Kid may not look especially tough, but his hook packs a wallop; you've got to duck fast.



[Above] Disco Kid dances around a bit too much and often drops his guard.



MINOR-CIRCUIT PROFILE

DISCO KID

The flamboyant Disco Kid is a new addition to the series, but his fight patterns fit right in with the classic styles of the series' regulars. Whereas his right jab is pretty easy to counter for a star, his left hook will slaughter you unless you duck or dodge to the right. The odd pauses in the timing of Disco Kid's punches can throw you off, and his hits pack more power than those of Glass Joe and Von Kaiser, but he spends as much time goofing around as he does taking swings at you. He's got two different taunt poses that offer easy stars, so you're able to deal him Star Punch after Star Punch.

TALE OF THE TAPE

AGE
20

FROM
Brooklyn, NY

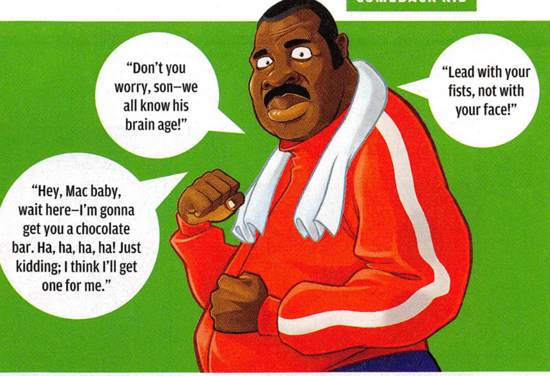
RECORD
4-12 (2 KOs)

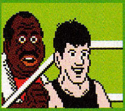
HEIGHT
6'3"

WEIGHT
210 lbs.

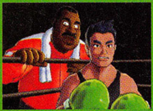
What's Up, Doc?

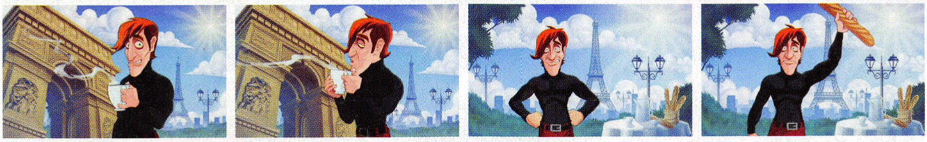
Little Mac's trainer from the first Punch-Out!!, Doc Louis, returns to offer more encouraging words and advice. You may want to punch him in his creepy eyes when he enthusiastically pushes you to get back in the ring after your tenth consecutive beat-down at the gloves of a tough opponent, but you'll appreciate the gameplay hints that he slips into in his between-round banter.


"Don't you worry, son—we all know his brain age!"
"Lead with your fists, not with your face!"
"Hey, Mac baby, wait here—I'm gonna get you a chocolate bar. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Just kidding; I think I'll get one for me."

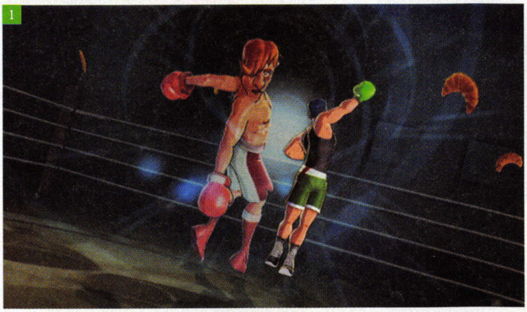


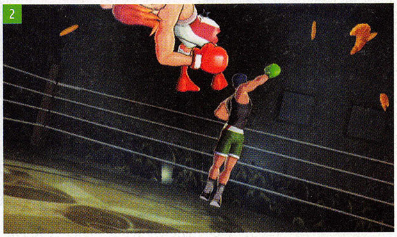
Then and now: Doc's aged well over the past 22 years. He even has more hair!



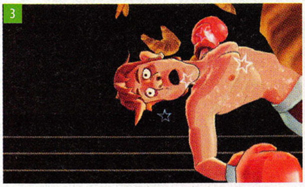


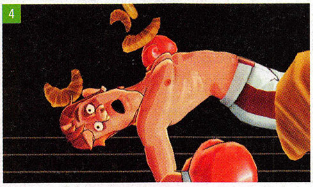
A new montage of illustrations precedes each bout and gives a little background on your opponent. Here, Glass Joe drops subtle hints about where he's from.

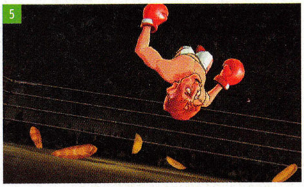


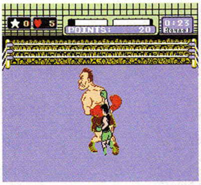


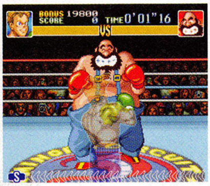
When your opponent is worn down and you deliver a powerful punch, you may be treated to a slow-motion cinema of a monstrous KO. How monstrous? Joe got the croissants knocked out of him!








0
5
POINTS: 20
0:23
ROUND 1

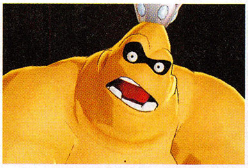

BONUS 19800
SCORE 0
TIME 0'01"16
VS

25 YEARS OF PUNCH-OUT!!

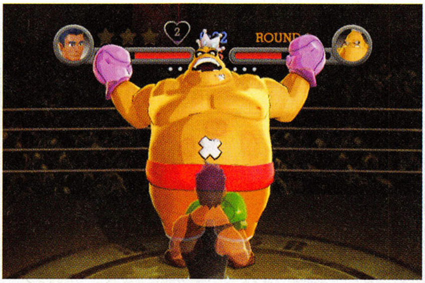
The very first Punch-Out!! was a 1984 arcade game, followed in 1985 by its arcade sequel Super Punch-Out!! In 1987 Nintendo released Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!! for the NES. Tyson was later replaced with a fictional champ called Mr. Dream in a 1990 re-release. The series' only other home-console installment came in 1994 with Super Punch-Out!! for the Super NES. Fans have waited 15 years for another shot at the title with Little Mac, and we're happy to say the Wii edition was worth the wait.

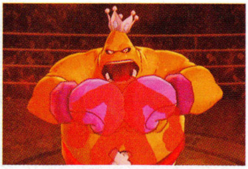
feel like a champ when you finally learn how to beat an opponent, and subsequent rematches often reveal depth that you didn't notice before, such as extra opportunities to earn stars and lay down more severe beatings.

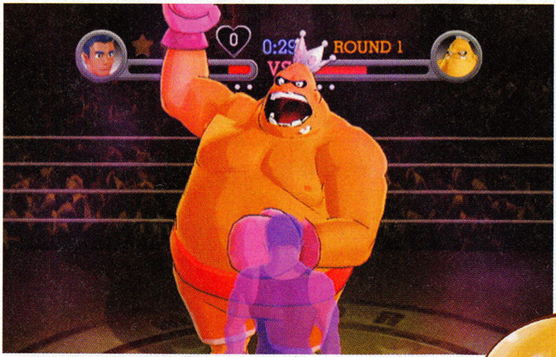
There are many more characters, plus extra new modes and features, that we can't talk about just yet (check back next issue), but we can tell you that this Punch-Out!! has a bit more to chew on than the series' past titles and will keep you playing for a good while. This is a true killer app for old-school players, and is proof positive that Nintendo still knows how to deliver a knockout punch to hardcore gamers.

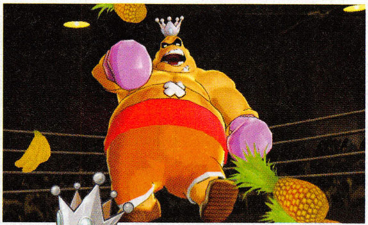


[Right and far right] When King Hippo rears back, duck or be destroyed.







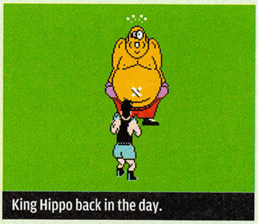


[Far left] Getting hit depletes your hearts; when they reach 0, you tire out and can't punch.

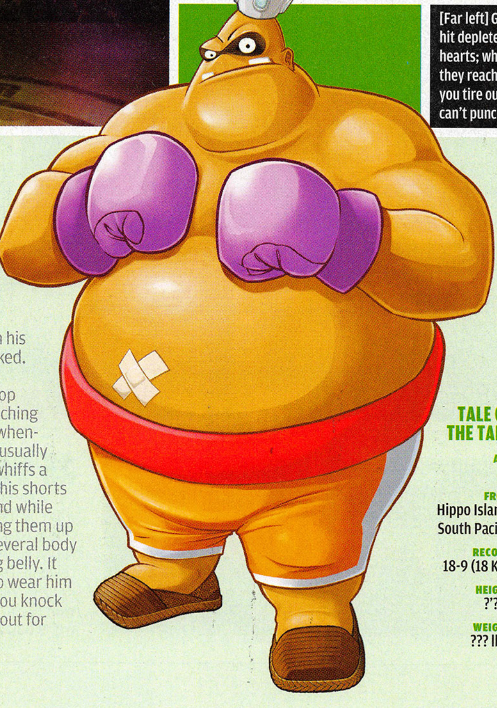
MINOR-CIRCUIT PROFILE

KING HIPPO

The Minor Circuit champ throws monster punches, but he isn't hard to predict. He will mainly jab and try to club you with an unorthodox overhead smash, both of which he can deliver with either arm. His third, and rarest, attack is a kind of double hook where he swings his arms around to crush you between his gloves; this can't be dodged or blocked—it must be ducked. Stars are hard to come by, but as any Punch-Out!! fan knows, the key to beating King Hippo is to get him to drop his shorts. Punching his big mouth whenever it's open (usually right after he whiffs a punch) causes his shorts to fall down, and while he's busy pulling them up you can land several body blows to his big belly. It takes a while to wear him out, but once you knock him down he's out for good.



King Hippo back in the day.



TALE OF THE TAPE

AGE
??

FROM
Hippo Island,
South Pacific

RECORD
18-9 (18 KO)

HEIGHT
?'??"

WEIGHT
??? lbs.

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G.I. JOE IS

The upcoming movie is only the beginning. Get ready to fight for freedom wherever there's trouble in **G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra** for Wii and DS.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

THERE

For more than 25 years, the G.I. Joe team—the world's most elite group of soldiers—has been defending the peace against the ruthless Cobra organization. Before that, G.I. Joe was an army of one, earning his stripes as America's first action figure. This August, the Joe team embarks on its biggest mission yet as it hits the silver screen for the first time with Paramount Pictures's *G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra*. And to complement the film, Electronic Arts is putting the fate of the Joes in your hands in an action-packed shoot-'em-up for Wii and DS.

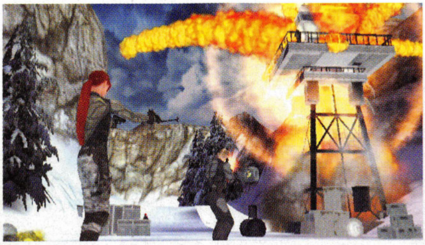
Even though the G.I. Joe game shares its title with the movie, the game is set after the film, and it incorporates numerous elements from throughout the Hasbro-created property's expansive mythos. "It's inspired by the film, but we're also taking a lot of inspiration and influence from the last 45 years of G.I. Joe history," says senior producer Matt Marsala. "There are a lot of elements that you're going to see in the game that you're not necessarily going to see directly in the film.... The toys, the comic books, cartoons—a lot of them are represented in here." Anyone who hasn't been living under a rock for the past few decades knows what that means: lots of fast-paced shooting action, a diverse team of heroes, and plenty of battles against the forces of Cobra.

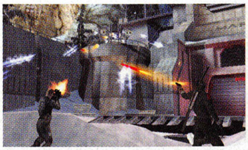
THE I IN TEAM

Among the reasons G.I. Joe has been going strong for such a long time are its colorful cast of characters and the way the team comes together to overcome the odds. The Wii game emphasizes both points by building its third-person shooting action around cooperative gameplay. If you're playing solo you can select two Joes and switch between them at any time, with the other character controlled by AI; in the single-screen two-player mode, each player will control a different Joe. More than 12 playable characters will be featured, including G.I. Joe field commander Duke, silent ninja Snake Eyes, weapons specialist Heavy Duty, female covert-ops agent Scarlett, pilot Ripcord, and sailor Shipwreck.

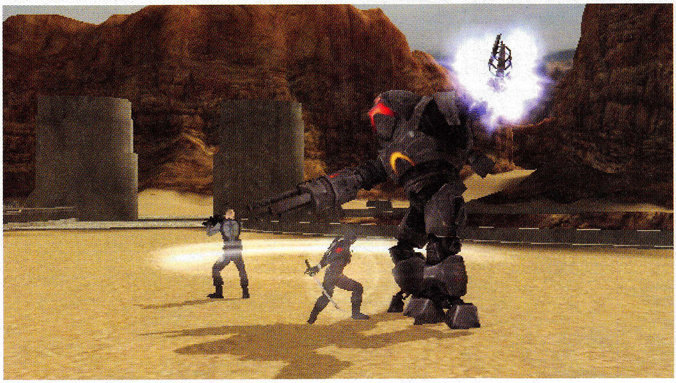
All of the characters who appear in the game will resemble their big-screen counterparts, and those who aren't in the movie will get similarly styled makeovers. "If you look at Shipwreck in the '80s, he looked more like a Village Person than a modern-day G.I. Joe guy," jokes Marsala, "so we've taken him and updated him greatly to match the rest of the Joe characters. There's a bunch of characters in there that people will be pretty excited about that they may not have seen for many, many years."

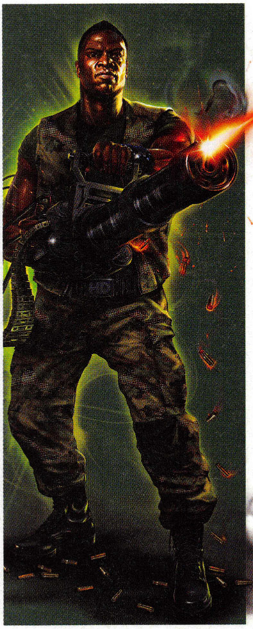
Most of the playable Joes fall into one of three classes: commando, heavy, or combat soldier. Commandos such as Snake Eyes and Scarlett are faster, more skilled at melee attacks, and better able to bound over obstacles; heavy characters such as Heavy Duty excel at long-range, intense-firepower attacks but are able to execute only single-strike melee blows; and combat soldiers like Duke fall





[Below] The G.I. Joe team members will face all kinds of bosses—including the Serpent Battle Armor—in the fight against Cobra.





somewhere in the middle. Certain bonus areas are accessible only by certain character classes, and some enemies are vulnerable to only particular types of attacks, so it's best to select your heroes based on the task at hand.

If you have a favorite character who isn't on the playable roster, take heart: he or she might still be in the game. Notable Joes such as General Hawk, Breaker, Snow Job, and Stalker appear as part of the team's Integrated Force, which offers radio intel and other support during your missions.

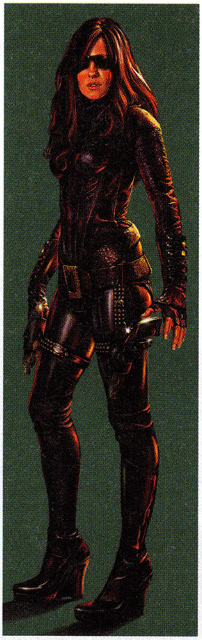
A BLAST FROM THE PAST

When it comes to the action, EA is following in the footsteps of the G.I. Joe property itself by taking an established idea from the past and bringing it roaring into the present. "We really want the player to feel like he's in an arcade action game," Marsala states. "[We want] an old-school '80s type of arcade-style feel, where it's a lot of pattern recognition and a lot of evasive maneuvers so you can kind of aim to get the best score possible."

Product manager Jason Enos adds, "I think when all of us...grew up playing with G.I. Joe, the types of games we were actually playing were more like your classic retro shooters, and so it's kind of a nice merger of the nostalgia appeal of G.I. Joe and the nostalgia appeal of that type of game—kind of marrying those two but bringing them to modern day."

The basic concept couldn't be simpler: charge through 20-plus levels (each made up of multiple parts) spread across four campaigns, and blow up everything that gets in your way. As you battle the armies of Cobra and MARS Industries (the military-armaments research syndicate that supplies the Joes with their hi-tech weapons but later sides with Cobra), you'll face a wide variety of enemy types, ranging from turrets and battle bunkers to foot soldiers such as Vipers, Neo-Vipers, MARS Troopers, BATs (Battle Android Troopers), Red Ninjas, and Night Creepers to vehicles such as HISS tanks, Crimson Attack Tanks, Flight Pods, Serpent Battle Armor, and Cobra Gunships. And yes, unlike the bad guys in the '80s cartoon, they *can* hit their targets.

"The goal was to pay tribute to the classic G.I. Joe game made by Taxan in the early '90s as well as other games that were popular when the Joes were last in their prime," explains Dax Berg, lead designer at developer Double Helix. "When I go out and demo this, I often get people telling me that this feels like a modern-day Contra, to which I reply, 'thank you,' because that is the exact compliment we are looking for. Our goal was to take a popular gaming style from 15-plus years ago and add all of the design knowledge and tech advances from that age till now, put it in a pot, and stir up some great modern arcade-style action."

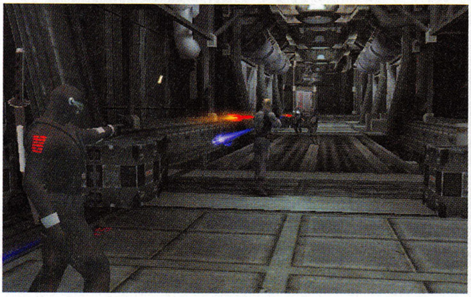


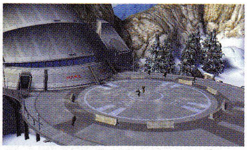
SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS

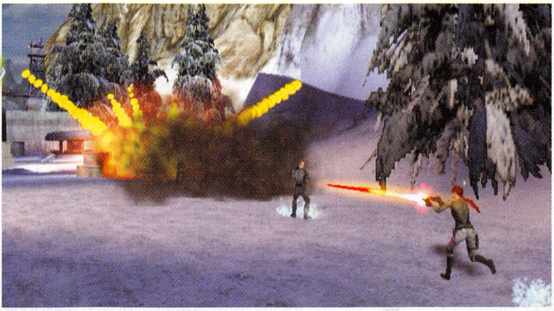
Though you could play through most of the game with nothing more than the Nunchuk's Control Stick for movement and the Wii Remote's B Button for firing your primary weapon, additional depth resides beneath the straightforward run-and-gun veneer. Each character has a melee attack that you unleash by swinging the Remote, as well as a special combat skill (activated by pressing the C Button) such as Snake Eyes's katana blast, Scarlett's explosive homing bolt, Duke's rapid grenade attack, and Ripcord's PAC-RAT turret. (Note that the control scheme is not final.) You'll be encouraged to act defensively, too; numerous cover points allow you to protect yourself from incoming fire, and you can perform evasive maneuvers by gesturing with the Nunchuk—which will likely come in handy as you learn each enemy type's unique firing pattern.

There are plenty of effective co-op tactics to take advantage of, as well, such as juggling an enemy

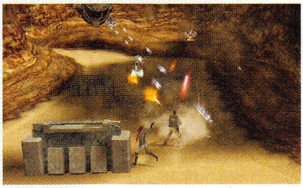
[Below] Snake Eyes, the Joe team's resident ninja, is silent but violent. Never mess with a man whose hobby is collecting spike-knuckled trench knives.







[Below] These barriers aren't just for show. You'll want to use them as cover from incoming attacks.



in the air with a powered-up melee attack while your partner blasts it out of the sky. Co-op attacks aren't just for show, either; when you both focus on the same enemy, you'll inflict extra damage and earn additional points. The game's co-op component also factors into the controllable vehicles you'll encounter, such as the MOBAT tank, the Snowcat arctic-assault half-track, or an abandoned Cobra vehicle—one player steers while the other mans the turret.

Another twist to the action comes in the form of the Satellite Strike minigame, in which one of your Integrated Force teammates helps you defend a Joe outpost. "We shift from the third-person perspective here...[to] more of a top-down, and it starts feeling a little bit like Missile Command," states Marsala. "You're protecting a Joe base, and we spawn wave after wave of enemies. It's up to the players to work towards individually fending off the enemies coming from every direction, and then cooperatively take care of some of the heavy armor. The goal is to survive five waves and keep your hardware intact."

Less interactive but just as satisfying is the ability to contact Joe pilot Wild Bill from specific hotspots and have him bombard the enemy with an air strike.

HE NEVER GIVES UP, HE'S ALWAYS THERE

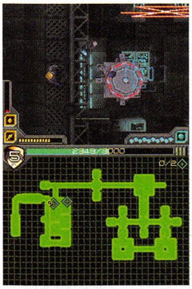
Of course, there are moments when there are no satellites or air strikes available and you're about to be overwhelmed by enemy forces—that's when it's time to let loose with your Accelerator Suit (which is a key part of the film). The points you earn aren't just for bragging rights; as your score rises, a meter fills that lets you suit up at the press of a button. Your character will raise his fist in the air and yell, "Yo Joe!" and as a rendition of the classic cartoon theme plays in the background, you'll be temporarily invulnerable, superfast, and able to pound your foes with your suit's Gatling gun and rocket launcher. The developers are considering implementing gesture controls that would allow you to actually raise your fist in the air to activate the suit.

The so-called "Yo Joe moment" isn't the only cartoon influence in the game. The story is heavily grounded in the lore of the early '80s animated G.I. Joe miniseries. "You would always have the Joes off in one part of the world fighting it out for a piece of the current 'Cobra puzzle,' then in the next episode they would be over in another part of the world gaining an additional piece of the pie. The episodes would be mini chapters in a larger story," explains Berg. "The game takes the same story format. Each environment or area of the world ends with the Joes gaining a victory in one part of the battle that eventually leads them to the final confrontation that helps them win a larger part of the war."

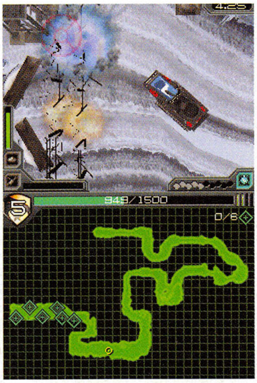
EA is keeping a lot of the story info under wraps, but it appears that the Joes and Cobra will be traveling the globe to gather the necessary components of the matter-teleporting MASS Device. A mysterious green substance (which you may have seen destroy the Eiffel Tower in the movie ad that ran during Super Bowl XLIII) plays a part as well. The race against Cobra will take you to jungles, desert canyons, the arctic, and beyond, and there will be both interior and exterior environments. The development team estimates that even on the easiest difficulty setting, it will take 8 to 10 hours to finish the Wii game, and that doesn't count time spent tackling bonus missions or unlocking hidden goodies (of which there will be plenty, including four vintage animated public-service announcements).

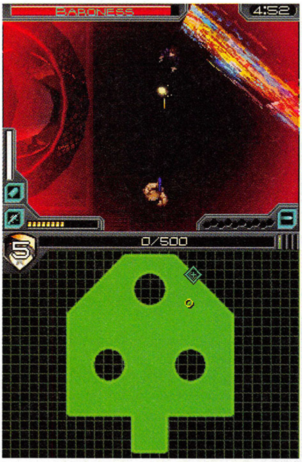
AMERICA'S MOVABLE FIGHTING MAN

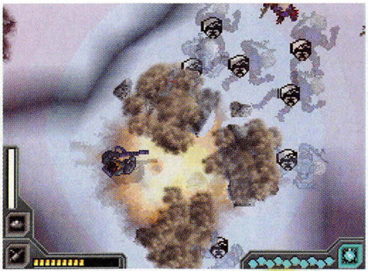
The DS version of G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra, meanwhile, offers its own unique gameplay experience. It shares many elements with its console cousin, but the developers at Backbone Entertainment are

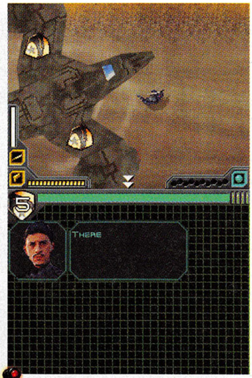


The DS version of G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra features top-down action, both on foot [above] and in vehicles [right].









[Above] Heavy Duty's land mine can take out lots of enemies at once.
[Left] The Baroness, one of Cobra's top agents, plans to make short work of Ripcord.

specifically designing the DS game to be conducive to the portable format.

"Fundamentally the Nintendo DS is different than all the other platforms. If we tried to port the game to the DS, sacrifices would have to be made everywhere: content, graphics, gameplay, audio, etc.," comments associate producer Nick Pavlich. "This would lead to a watered-down product, so instead we opted to build the game from the ground up for the DS while leveraging much of the console's content. The DS shares the console [version]'s storyline, roster, music, and play style. The levels are completely different from its console counterpart—different layouts, different objectives, props, scenery, everything. This gives the fans the opportunity to experience both G.I. Joe offerings and have a unique experience with each."

Since the levels in the DS version are less linear than in the Wii game, the lower screen frequently functions as a map; the lower screen is also where you'll receive incoming data transmissions. More significantly, the DS game contains light RPG elements that allow characters to level up and increase in power as they defeat foes. Another difference is that the DS version's story mode is built around controlling a single character at a time (although you can select your Joe at the start of each mission and when you continue).

You'll rely primarily on the Control Pad and buttons to move, shoot, dodge, and execute melee strikes; there are no touch-screen controls. Like in the Wii version, however, each character has unique secondary attacks. Duke can throw grenades, Snake Eyes has a sword attack, Heavy Duty drops land mines, and Shipwreck can send out his parrot to drop bombs on foes (seriously). When you fill up a special meter, you'll also be able to activate a character-specific special skill. Heavy Duty, for example, unleashes a massive explosion that wipes out all nearby enemies; Scarlett has a Combat Focus ability that lets her take out any enemy in one hit; and Ripcord can go into a temporary overdrive mode that gives him increased firepower, infinite ammo, and faster attacks. You'll be able to acquire vehicles (even enemy vehicles, such as HISS tanks) and Accelerator Suits during missions, too.

The DS version also has a separate gameplay type that the console version doesn't: competitive multiplayer. Up to four players can battle it out (in one-on-one, one-on-two, or two-on-two configurations), with one side assuming the role of G.I. Joe and the other side controlling Cobra characters such as Destro, the Baroness, and Storm Shadow. Three competitive modes are included: Team Battle (a traditional deathmatch-style versus fight), Warhead (in which each team will attempt to capture the MARS briefcase and plant it in the opposing team's base), and Defend the Base (in which, as the name implies, one team is tasked with defending its base from the opposing team's attacks).

The Warhead and Defend the Base modes are specifically designed for coordinated two-on-two action. "Success is due to teamwork," says Pavlich. "[Warhead] requires close coordination with your teammate, as one person has to carry the case while the other person is the escort to the detonation zone. In Defend the Base you and your team member will have to either coordinate an assault or defend the base. An example: one way to help defend the base is to launch an air strike against the attacking team. To do so will require one person to act as a scout while the other person is back at the base coordinating the strike."

COMMENCE OPERATION

Electronic Arts is working closely with the folks at Paramount Pictures and Hasbro to ensure that no matter whether you're playing the game on Wii or DS, it will deliver intense action and be true to the G.I. Joe name. Hasbro has given EA wide-open access to the G.I. Joe universe (they even allowed EA to include an unproduced G.I. Joe toy as one of the vehicles in the Wii game), and in turn, Hasbro is incorporating some game elements into the upcoming G.I. Joe toy line.

EA is also giving G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra a longer development cycle than a typical movie tie-in (including an extended tuning and polishing period) to ensure that it ends up being superior to the usual licensed fare. When the game hits this July, we'll know how it pays off—and as you may have heard, knowing is half the battle.

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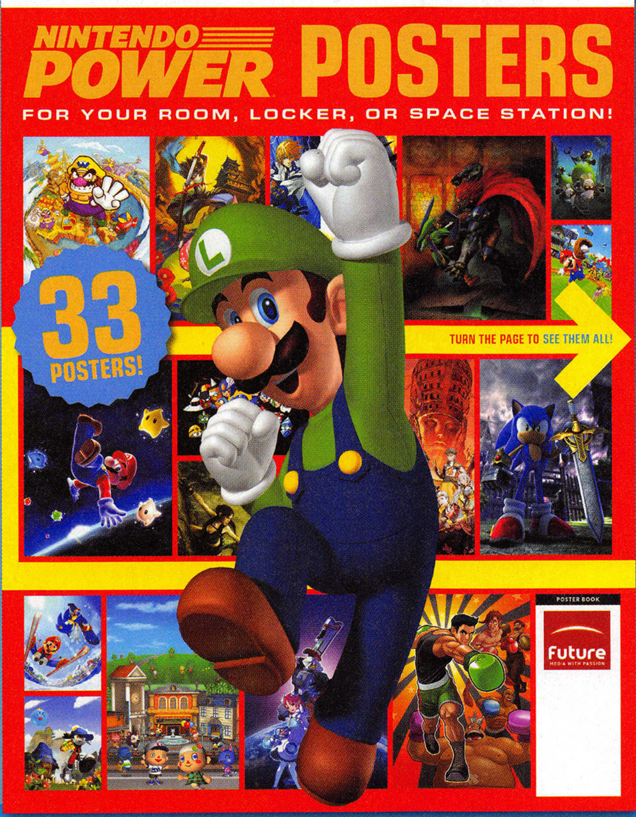
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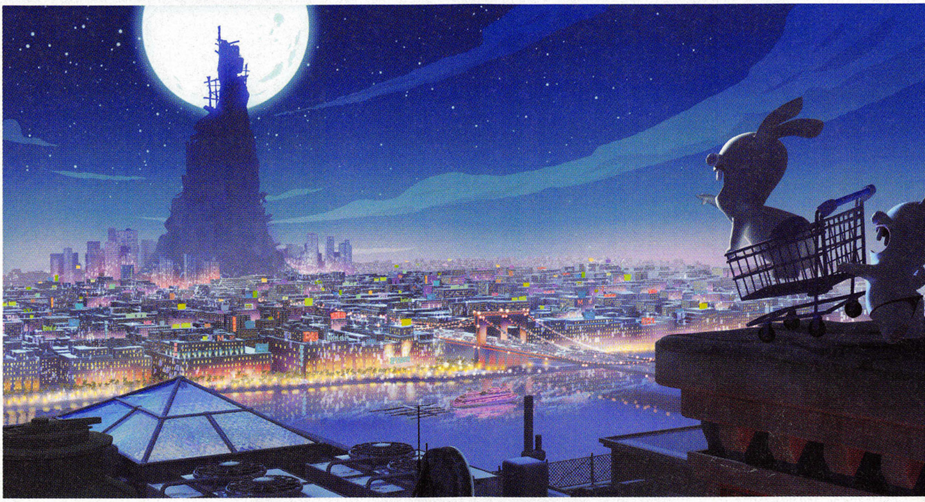
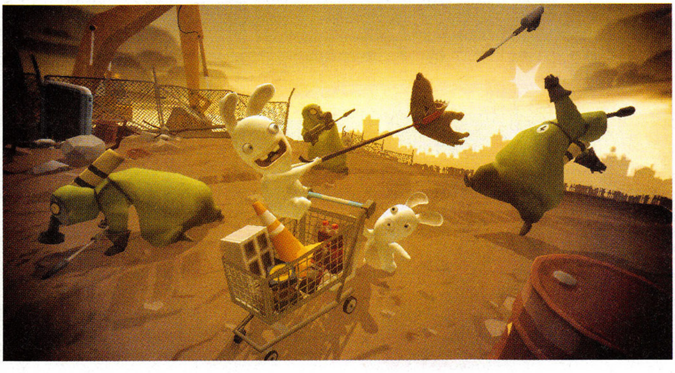
BY KAISER HWANG

Down the Rabbid Hole

Ubisoft's Rabbids Go Home shows us what a shopping cart, a jockstrap, and half-naked humans have in common.



When the Rabbids first made their appearance in the hit party game Rayman Raving Rabbids, no one knew what to think. Here were some (aptly named) rabbitlike creatures that mocked other Ubisoft properties, appeared to have Tourette's syndrome, and stole the limelight from the French company's mascot and the game's named character, Rayman. Though the three party games the Rabbids have now appeared in give some vague context to their existence, the upcoming Rabbids Go Home is the one that truly expands upon their story and gives the fuzzy little creatures a twisted and unforgettable adventure to take on.



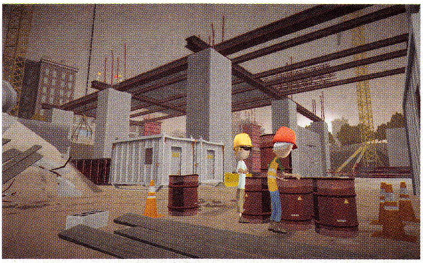
A VERY SITUATIONAL COMEDY

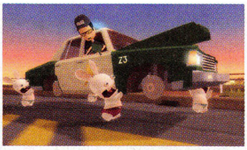
Rabbids Go Home is billed as a comedy adventure, and our hands-on time with the game bears out that description. The game looks, feels, and plays like a cross between a Saturday-morning cartoon and a traditional video game—and that was definitely the intention. "Today, there are very few games on the

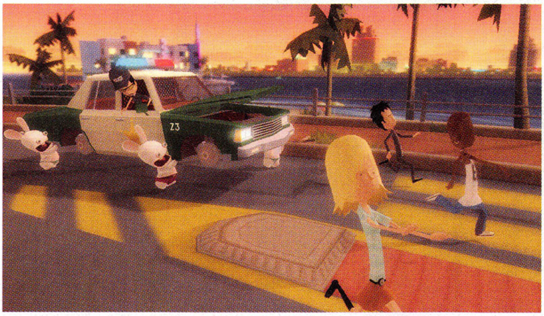
market that would qualify as comedies," says Jacques Exertier, creative director at Ubisoft's Montpellier studio. "Conker on N64 was a comedy, maybe the LucasArts adventures for PC in the '90s. We got most of our inspiration for the comedy elements of the game from the likes of Tex Avery and classic Warner Bros. cartoons, recent animated sitcoms like *The Simpsons*, Pixar's CGI features, and live-action comedies like *Borat* and the Monty Python series. Like Hardy and Laurel, Pinky and the Brain, and so many other hilarious comic duos, the Rabbids play the 'funny men' to the uptight, human 'straight men.'"

Having been in development for roughly three years and with over 80 people contributing, Rabbids Go Home is clearly much more than a party game. "By the time the first opus hit Wii [at the] end of 2006, we knew that these characters could play a leading gig," says Exertier. "So after exploring new weird and wonderful Wii moves with the Rabbid party games, we now wanted to go further and give core and casual players a deeper and more varied experience, and tell a story from the Rabbids' side-splitting point of view."

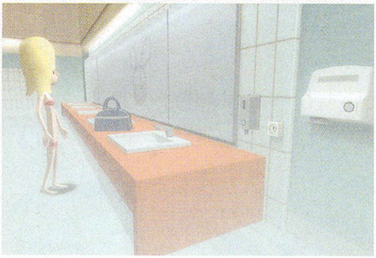
So what's the story behind this Rabbids adventure? The Rabbids want to go home. Where's home? Not even the Rabbids know for sure, but the moon has caught their attention—and become "home" in the process. Now the Rabbids must collect and build a pile of junk high



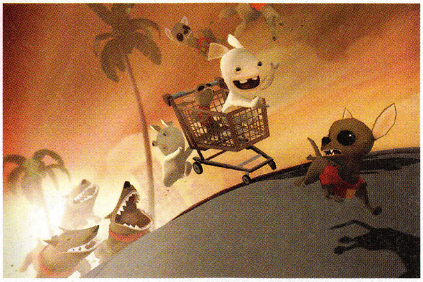




Rabbids can literally scare the pants off of humans, and then add their clothes to the junk pile.



Expect over 50 missions in 20 different environments.



enough that they can reach the moon. It's an odd setup, and from what we can tell, the story is the sanest part of the game.

BOSOM BUNNIES

When playing the game, you control two Rabbids at once: one who sits inside a shopping cart, and another who pushes it. Collecting junk is as easy as touching it to make it fly into your cart, though some pieces require an extra step. For instance, if you want to collect the clothes off one of the many human citizens in the world, you use your "Bwah!" attack to scare the clothes right off of their bodies, leaving them shivering in their underwear. (It's all done in a very family-friendly way, of course.)

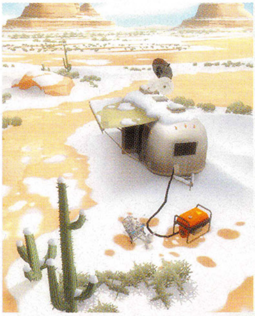
Items aren't just for building a mountain to the moon. "Lots of the stuff the Rabbids snag throughout the adventure will give players new abilities for moving or attacking with the shopping cart," explains Exertier. "A jet engine strapped to your cart will suddenly propel you at three times your normal speed. With a big tire attached, you can bounce off surfaces and off enemies like a bumper car. [You can also] float and glide with the Bubble Bed onboard, and upgrade your caddy with a jet ski to power-slide through water!"

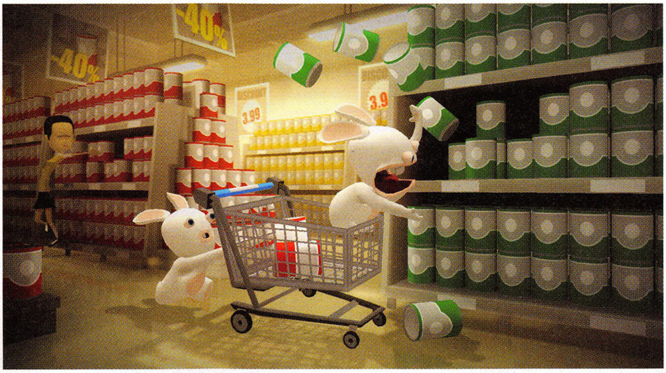
More than simple power-ups, these temporary cart upgrades are essential to the game. In our demo, the aforementioned Bubble Bed gave us the power to not only jump, but triple-jump. This ability was absolutely necessary to sail high above city rooftops and reach the end of the level. We got to play through only the game's tutorial and first level, but the seamless inclusion of the cart upgrades holds a lot of potential. Ubisoft compares it to how Mario can gain new abilities through different costumes in Super Mario Galaxy.

The Rabbids themselves are customizable as well. We didn't see this in action, but we were shown some art of potential costumes, including a pair of boxer shorts, a jockstrap, and—by far our favorite—the "Adam," a fig leaf covering the Rabbid's groin. Is this obsession with undergarments intentional? You bet. "I can only say that customizing the Rabbids is one of the most hilarious elements of Rabbids Go Home, and a full-blown part of the comedy-adventure," says Exertier. "The Wii Remote will never be the same again. And beware: the Rabbids are very into chic undies and campy accessories, but let's leave it at that for now."

FRIGHTENED RABBID

The main opposition in Rabbids Go Home is humans. Besides being complete germophobes,





[Right] The best shopping cart physics around? We'd say so.

humans are absolutely terrified of the Rabbids. Most will simply run away, though a number of them fight back and take a stand. Exertier explains: "Humans will start defending their fries, siccing mean pooches on the Rabbids, designing surveillance robots, and generally equipping themselves with anti-Rabbid kits and traps, until they become Verminators! Anti-Rabbid propaganda explodes, and with it the Verminator craze, anything to sell more stuff and get us back to the quiet, boring, and stuff-laden existence we led before those heinous Rabbids showed up!"

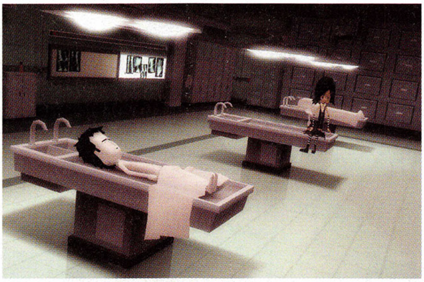
Combat early in the game is very simple: by shaking the Wii Remote, your Rabbids will shout "Bwah!" at the enemies, causing a radiating wave of damage. That's about it. (But don't let the simplicity scare you off. Rabbids Go Home isn't primarily an action game; the gameplay involves as much navigation as it does combat and collection.) Humans aren't the only cause of fights. There are also time attack missions, and boss fights. Even in the first stage, taking place in a hospital wing, you come across a large bomb-throwing turret. To defeat it you must grab the bombs it throws and toss them back before they explode.

Even with the variety of gameplay, the controls in Rabbids Go Home are insanely simple. You use the Control Stick for movement, and the evolution of your cart will add a few more controls, like simple button presses for jumping. There are no camera controls, so once you've mastered moving the cart around and attacking (which takes all of about 30 seconds to do), you're set to go. This simplicity in the controls makes it incredibly easy to get into, right from the start, whether you're a seasoned gamer or completely new to games.

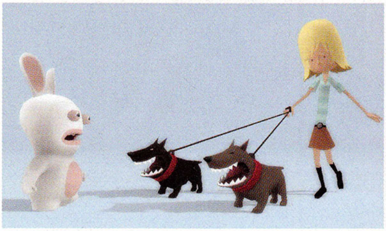
But that doesn't mean this is a kiddie game or that it won't appeal to fans of franchises like Metroid and Zelda. In fact, Ubisoft is aiming to give the game the feel of a classic Nintendo adventure. "We aim to vary the pleasures and challenges of driving, enemy battles, mission formats, and the shopping-cart controls, and try to introduce a new ingredient every five minutes of play in order to constantly surprise the player with either a gag, a story event, or a gameplay mechanic," shares Exertier. He continues, "Core Nintendo gamers should enjoy the controls and the gameplay variety...as well as the 'open progressive' structure of the game, whereby players unlock multiple missions to choose from as they move through the game. We are working to make Rabbids Go Home 'easy to learn, hard to master' in the finest Nintendo tradition."

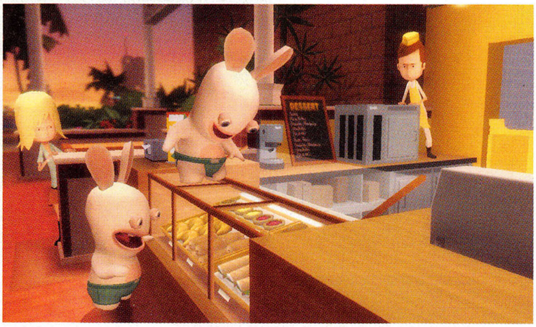
PULLED OUT OF A HAT

Powering the game is a brand-new graphics engine called LyN. The engine was made to be very efficient on both older and newer consoles, and at the same time be very easy to use and expand upon. LyN has properties that make it good for specific consoles, as well. "For Wii in particular, the engine maximizes the capacity of the console by managing the totality



Humans are scared of Rabbids. Rabbids are scared of dogs. We're scared of the Rabbids' underwear.





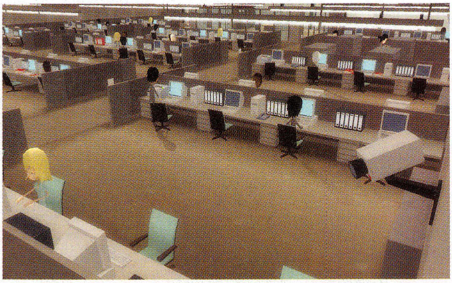
of the graphical pipeline within the engine itself," Exertier explains. "The advantage of this engine compared with earlier generations is its capacity to optimize graphical resources without limiting the imaginations of the teams of artists and designers who use it."

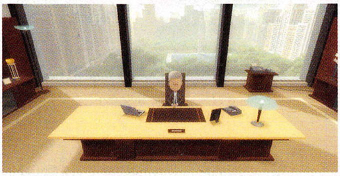
The results, even at this early stage, are quite impressive. Rabbids Go Home has a unique look that's very simple but also striking. The top-notch art direction is a huge part of that, and the game exudes a 3-D-ness that's almost surreal. The clever use of visual gags, such as the grainy security camera view used when riding in elevators, only emphasizes the use of LyN as a tool that doesn't limit the artists.

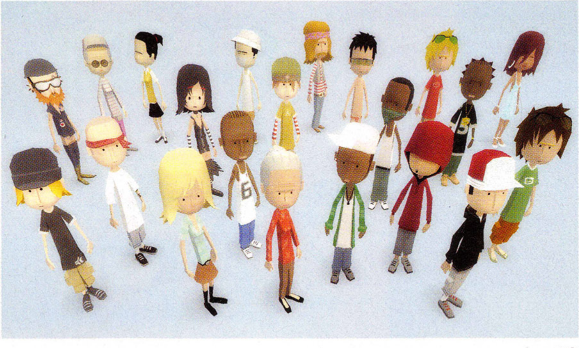
The development team was going for a "Pixar look and feel," Exertier tells us. "Pixar designs spare environments that give their characters space to breathe and shine, without ever feeling lifeless," he says. "Ours is not the same medium or the same technology, but we strive to find a similar balance between simplistic yet varied playing worlds and rich characters in Rabbids Go Home. Also, we do our best to create the kind of two-tiered humor and memorable characters that keep both kids and parents of all ages laughing and coming back for more."

HOME IS WHERE THE MOON IS

We got only a taste of Rabbids Go Home, but that was more than enough to get us hooked. There's still a ton of stuff we haven't had a chance to talk about, including the two-player co-op functionality, the online features, and the wildly addictive music. Expect much more on this game in the coming months.







Yuji Naka's first new game in years is quirky, experimental, and strangely compelling. If you're looking for something outside the norm, Let's Tap.

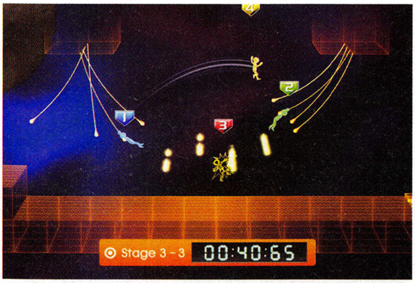
GOOD VIBRATIONS

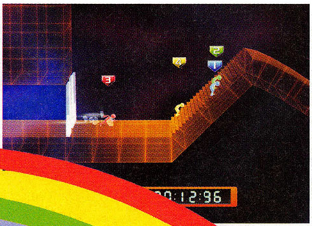
There's no shortage of minigame collections on Wii, but Let's Tap stands out from the pack. For starters, it's the debut effort from Prope, the new independent studio founded by Sonic the Hedgehog cocreator Yuji Naka. It's also the first game that you can play without touching a controller. Instead you place the Wii Remote facedown on a box or other flat surface, then simply tap with your fingertips, and the controller picks up on the vibrations. It's a completely alien experience, but it's immediately fun and feels surprisingly intuitive. The package, due this June for a mere $30, consists of five distinct activities. We recently visited Prope's Tokyo offices, where we got to try out all five minigames with Naka himself before sitting down with the legendary designer for a rare chat.

BY STEVE THOMASON

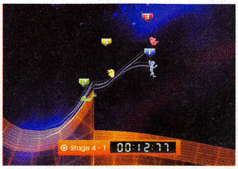
TAP RUNNER

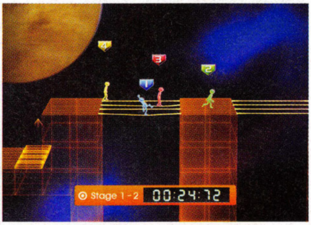
Judging by what we've played thus far, Tap Runner seems like the highlight of the collection. The goal is to guide your matchstick man through a side-scrolling, platform-style obstacle course, crossing the finish line before the competition (up to three other players or the CPU). Light taps govern your runner's speed, and a steady rhythm will give him a temporary speed boost. A firm tap causes him to jump. On the surface, it's every bit as accessible and straightforward as it sounds. Anyone can play, but the cleverly designed levels are rife with alternate routes and devious trap placement, rewarding those who demonstrate skillful timing and a keen eye. There are 16 courses in all, and new obstacles are introduced on a regular basis to keep you on your toes (or fingertips, we should say). You'll leap over hurdles, swing from ropes, avoid falling blocks, inflate balloons, and even make like Kool-Aid Man by crashing through walls. Oh yeah!





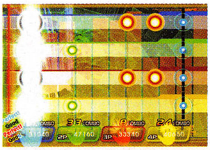
[Left] The escalators let you give your fingers a rest.

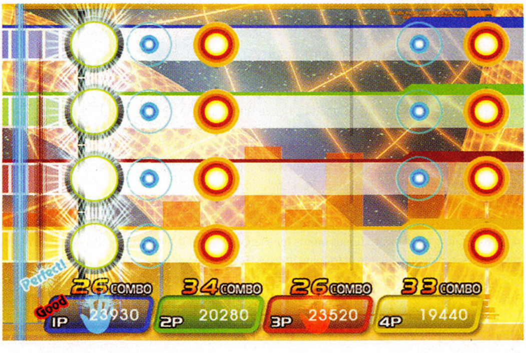




RHYTHM TAP

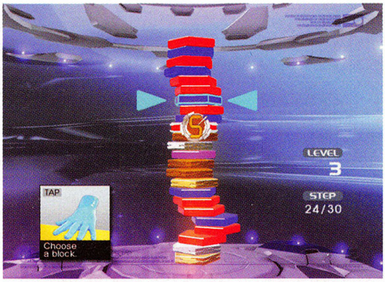
If the experience of playing Let's Tap can be compared to anything, it's rapping on the Bongo Controller that was introduced with Donkey Konga for the GameCube. It's sort of a no-brainer, then, that Let's Tap includes an activity similar to Nintendo's ape-centric rhythm game. Unlike Donkey Konga and most other music titles, however, Rhythm Tap is less about timing (it's quite forgiving in that regard) and more about adjusting the strength of your beats to the onscreen prompts. It shows off just how precise the game is at picking up the force behind each tap. (You can even adjust it to your personal tap strength in the Options menu.) There are 16 songs to unlock, consisting primarily of original synth tunes. Some of the tracks are catchier than others, but there's no doubt "Let's tap, let's tap...future tapping game!" will crawl into your head and live there for the rest of your days. In multiplayer mode, each person is assigned a different layer of the song, and the result is somewhat akin to aural chaos.





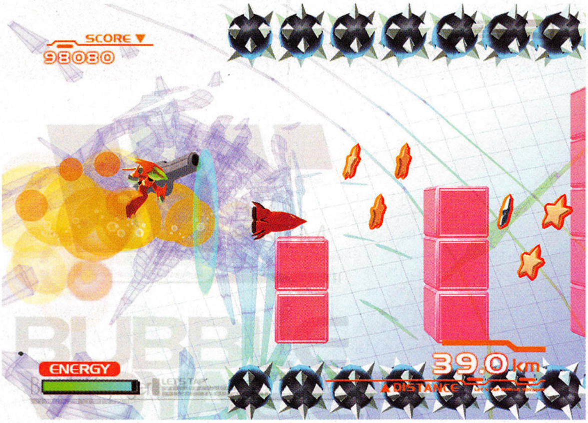
SILENT BLOCKS

Though the meaning behind its name eludes us, Silent Blocks is easy to explain: it's Jenga meets Bejeweled. The core concept involves pulling blocks from a stack without bringing the whole thing tumbling down. As each block is highlighted in turn, you tap once to select your target. A cursor then begins to revolve around the block, and you tap again to indicate the direction you wish to pull. After that, it's a matter of tapping with just the right amount of pressure to excavate the block while avoiding catastrophe. In Unlimited mode, that's all there is to it. Players take turns pulling blocks until someone (aka the loser) causes the tower to collapse. Alchemist mode requires a bit more strategy—each piece is either red or blue, and if you manage to stack three of the same color, they'll create a bronze. Three contiguous bronze blocks beget a silver, three silvers beget a gold, and so forth. With multiple players, it's a race to create a predetermined type of block first. The mode's single-player offering, on the other hand, is simply about racking up points and establishing a high score. The tower grows larger as you progress, though, and wrinkles such as bomb blocks are mixed in to wreak havoc with your designs.

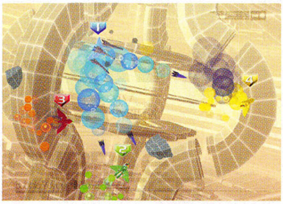


LEVEL
7
STEP
TAP
Choose a direction

Silent Blocks is definitely the most cerebral of Let's Tap's activities.

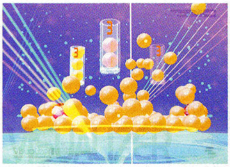


BUBBLE VOYAGER



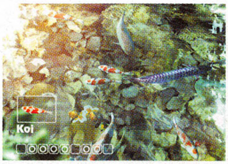
Bubble Voyager comes in two distinct flavors. The single-player Endless Voyage looks a bit like a classic shoot-'em-up at first blush, but as you progress through the mazelike array of floating mines and other dangers, you'll find the primary focus is on steering your craft rather than blasting everything in sight. Gentle taps propel the ship forward and upward, while letting up causes it to slowly lose altitude. A firm tap fires a missile. Like in an old-school arcade game, the goal is simply to last as long as you can and rack up as many points as possible before your ship's health is depleted. (Checkpoints along the way refill your energy and award bonus points for a smooth landing.) The game pushes you through some pretty tight spots, so you'll need lots of tapping finesse if you hope to get very far.

On the other end of the spectrum, the multiplayer Battlefield is an all-out blast-a-thon to be the last voyager standing. Your ship rotates in place, and when it's pointing in the desired direction, you start tapping to get it moving. Firm taps again serve to launch missiles, but you can also snag power-ups to boost your offensive capabilities.



VISUALIZER

The final component of Let's Tap isn't so much a game as it is a peculiar art application. It consists of five settings, and each reacts to your taps in different ways. You can set off fireworks above a neon skyline, splash paint across a canvas, and send ripples through the water of a beautifully rendered sea. Light, medium, and heavy taps all have different effects, and as you might expect from a Yuji Naka title, you can unlock all sorts of Easter eggs by stringing together certain sequences. You might trigger an especially spectacular fireworks display, for instance, or summon a majestic blue whale. Visualizer certainly isn't as engaging as the other play modes, but it's meant to be a fun diversion that lets you just tap away, carefree.



Out of the Blue

UNTIL A COUPLE of years ago, Yuji Naka was the head of Sonic Team, one of the video game industry's most successful development studios. While Naka was at the helm, Sonic Team produced an impressive body of work, including Sonic the Hedgehog, NiGHTS into Dreams, Phantasy Star Online, and Samba de Amigo. But as the group's size ballooned, Naka was forced to spend more and more of his time in a management role. Eager to return to the creative side of things, the veteran developer left the team he cofounded more than 15 years ago and started Prope. As we sat down to discuss his new company's rookie effort and what he envisions for Prope's future, Naka seemed rejuvenated, contemplative, and above all else, excited to be making games again.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you come up with the idea for Let's Tap?**

YUJI NAKA When I started Prope, my first idea was to create a new character-action game like Sonic. I'm used to creating those types of games from my time at Sega. But while doing some tests with the Wii Remote, I was talking with my programmer and put the controller on a desk. When I accidentally bumped the desk with my arm, the remote responded. It actually picked up on that movement. So I thought it might be interesting to create a game where you just tap the desk. Before that, I didn't realize just how sensitive the Wii Remote is. I wanted to take advantage of that, and I thought of it a bit like driving a car, where you have full control of how much you're pushing on the gas.

How many other people worked on the game, and what are some of the other titles they've worked on previously?

The main staff consisted of about 10 people, but eventually everyone at Prope participated in the game's development. They all came from different companies throughout the industry, so it's hard to single out just one or two titles that individuals have worked on previously.

Which is your personal favorite of the five activities included in the game?

I would say the Gem Game in Visualizer mode. When we announced the game in Japan, our catch phrase was "The game even penguins can play." I think the Gem Game best typifies that concept. Most of the activities require many different types of input from the player. But with the Gem Game, you can just sort of tap away without thinking too much. There's still an objective, but people of all ages can play it without any trouble.

What drew you to the Wii platform for your studio's debut title?

The name Prope comes from the Latin word for near; as in the near future. Wii is the platform that best fits our company's concept. I want to develop games on hardware that most gives us a sense of the future. There are so many sequels in the industry right now. I want to create games that explore the future.

Does that mean we can expect more Wii support from Prope in the near future?

Yes, I think so. [Laughs] It sort of depends on Sega, though, since we have a very close relationship with them. I've come up with several character-action game concepts, but none of them have been approved yet. We're still thinking about how to make a character-action game for Wii, though.

You were one of the people who really popularized that genre back in its heyday. What's been your line of thinking for how to best update it?

I have lots of things I would like to say about that, but we'll have to wait for Sega's decision! [Laughs]

But it sounds like something you're eager to tackle.

Yes indeed. Sonic is more than 15 years old now, and I would really like to create a new character that grows to have the same impact. If I have the opportunity to create a lot of character-action games,

Naka prepares to give NP's Steve Thomason a harsh lesson in tapping.

maybe one of them will be as popular as Sonic some day. That was one of my main goals when starting Prope. Were I still at Sega, I'd have to work only with Sonic if I wanted to make a new character-action game.

Are there any other particular types of games that you would like to see Prope work on?
I don't really set out to work on a particular genre. I just try to come up with new ideas and go from there. I typically don't have a predetermined genre in mind.

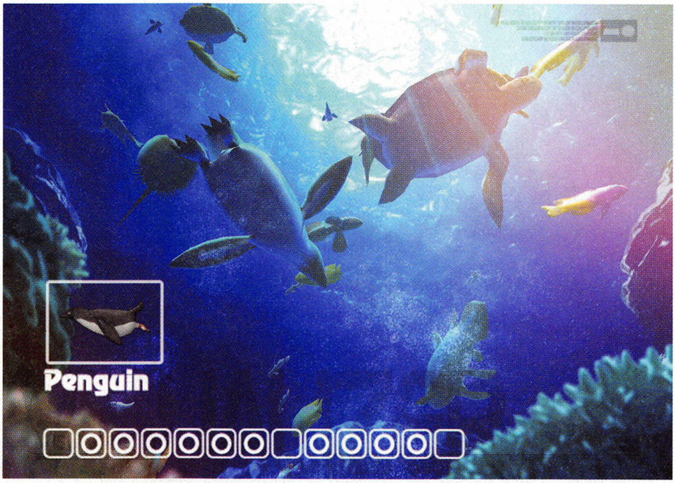
How big is the studio at the moment? Do you want to expand it further or do you think it's a good size right now?
We currently have 44 employees, including myself. In the future, I'd like to have about 50 people. But I want to keep it at a size where the entire studio can fit on one floor like we have currently. When I was the head of Sonic Team, we had about 140 employees, and I just wasn't able to talk with each of the developers individually. I don't think that's a good thing. I like to work with each developer more closely. So I want to keep our team here relatively small.

What creative role did you play personally in the development of Let's Tap?
I did a little bit of everything. My title is producer, but I did a lot of directing. I even did some QA [quality assurance] work, checking the game's balance and whatnot. [Laughs] I never could have done that at Sonic Team.

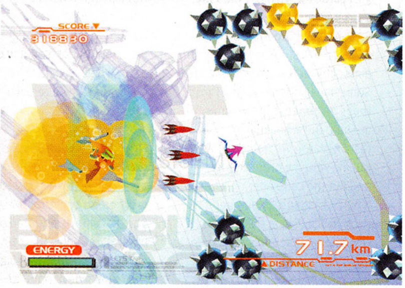
At a big publisher, when a developer gets promoted to a certain point, he can't even play his own games anymore. He has to spend all of his time on management rather than actual development. But I used to be involved in lots of different aspects of game creation—programming, debug, etc. I wanted to get back to that with Prope. Here, I can be involved in every process of a game's development.

You mentioned that Prope's main focus is on new properties, but since the studio is working closely with Sega, is there any chance you might return to some of your previous works? The main reason we ask is because a new ChuChu Rocket would be perfect for WiiWare.
[Laughs] If I wanted to continue working on my old properties, I should have stayed at Sega, you know? Like you said, I want to create new things. But if the new idea I'm thinking about right now doesn't get approved by Sega, I might have to update an old franchise.

What would you like to see become Prope's defining characteristic, or what it becomes known for?
I want Prope to be the company that is always trying new things that people have never seen before. Recently, I heard someone who played Let's Tap for the first time say, "This game is really a Naka game." I was happy about that, because I want to be someone who's always identified with creating new experiences. That's a characteristic I want to communicate to gamers.



[Left] Thomason, Naka, Sega of Japan's Yuka Yoshida, and Let's Tap director Shunsuke Kawarazuka poised for a four-player tap-off.



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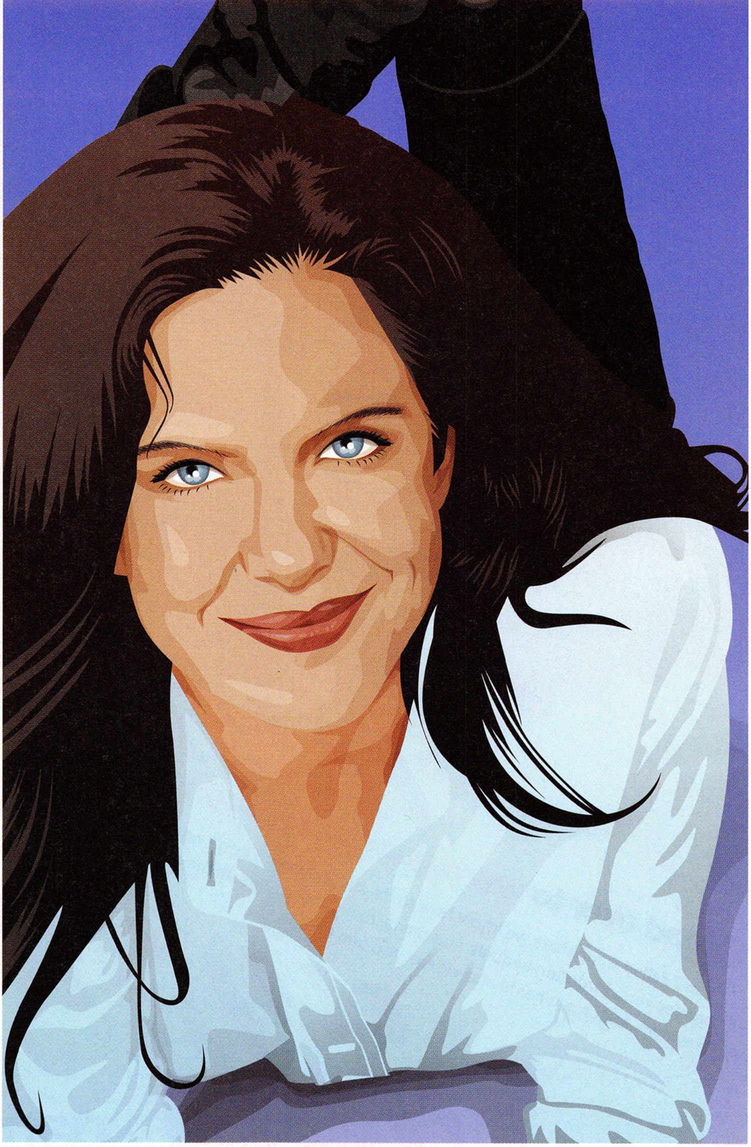
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
January 1, 1972

BIRTHPLACE
North West River, Labrador, Canada

POSITION
Actress/voice actress

BEST KNOWN FOR
Providing voices for characters in dozens of hit video games, being the first female subject of Power Profiles

FAVORITE FOOD
Chocolate, ice cream, and vegetables (but not all of them together)

CURRENT PROJECTS
A game featuring Jack Black written by Tim Schafer, and projects for LucasArts and Blizzard Entertainment

Jennifer Hale

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Even if you don't know the name Jennifer Hale, you've probably heard her voice. The Canadian-born actress is one of the most prolific talents in video games and animation, having provided voices for literally hundreds of characters, including Samus Aran in the Metroid Prime trilogy. Hale caught the attention of many gamers thanks to her standout portrayal of the duplicitous Dr. Naomi Hunter in Konami's Metal Gear Solid series (in which she was credited under the pseudonym Carren Learning), but she's also lent her voice to a veritable who's-who of entertainment icons, such as Rogue and Jean Grey from the X-Men, Galadriel from The Lord of the Rings, Aayla Secura from Star Wars, and the title character in Disney's Cinderella sequels. From bounty hunters to ninjas to Jedi knights, Hale has done it all.

NINTENDO POWER **How did you become interested in being an actor and then a voice actor?**

JENNIFER HALE I went to a fine arts high school in Alabama (Alabama School of Fine Arts) and it was either that or singing, and acting just took off for me.

How did that evolve into a career for you?

I was working at a video studio next to an audio studio and they asked me to come next door and do a quick commercial, and that was pretty much it. They were generous enough to show me the ropes and I worked it pretty hard to get things going.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Anything with animals or an architect or a singer. I still can't decide.

What kind of acting experiences did you have early in your career?

I did a bit more film and TV stuff, then when I moved to LA, voiceover just took off for me.

Do you prefer doing voice acting or traditional acting?

I love them both, but I have to say voice has such amazing possibilities and has given me so much. It has a special place in my heart, and in voiceover you can be almost anything, which I love.

How did you first become involved with the video game industry?

I was working on a cartoon series, *Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?*, and we did a game for that series—that was my first big role in a game. I remember being completely overwhelmed by the crazy number of lines.

How did it feel to give a voice to Samus Aran, often considered the "first lady of video games"?

Awesome. She's been very popular and I'm honored to have played her.

Was there anything particularly memorable about the recording sessions for the Metroid Prime games?

Like all games, it had its own world, its own reality, and I really liked the production team.

Was there anything you were told about Samus that shaped how you played her?

Samus really came from the writing and the vision of the director and, behind that, the producers.

Are there any other Nintendo characters you'd be interested in playing?

Ha! As many as I can!

Another one of our favorite roles you performed was Naomi Hunter in Metal Gear Solid. What was your approach to that character?

Naomi has the ability to pursue a goal no matter what it takes and to find the justification behind whatever she has to do. I like how smart she is. I don't always agree with her choices, but she's got an incredibly strong mind and I like that. As far as approaching the character, I always start with the writing: where do I fit in the writer's vision, how can I bring the most to the project, how can I give the production team what they need?

When Naomi Hunter first appeared, she had a British accent. Was it weird to revisit the character without an accent for Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes? Do you prefer the accent or nonaccent version?

I like the unity in Twin Snakes; to me the MGS series just got stronger and stronger with each volume. The accent works for me either way.

What do you like about the Naomi character?

She's smart, she's mentally tough, she sees the big picture. On the other hand, I'm not entirely sure I'd trust her.

You've played a lot of iconic characters. What does it mean to contribute to the mythos of properties like Star Wars, X-Men, Spider-Man, etc.?

Fantastic. I feel really, really lucky. Working with these people is working with the best of the best, and you can't beat that.

What's the process like for recording video game dialogue?

Long. We typically work one actor at a time, though some projects, like MGS, allow us to work together.

Do you generally get to see the full script in advance, or just your lines?

It varies. Some projects come as a full script, others a cut of just our lines. The scripts tend to be massive.

You've probably read a lot of game scripts. What scripts have really stood out to you?

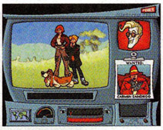
One for a confidential project I just worked on for EA was amazing. Don't know if we'll see it, but the whole experience was fantastic. One I just worked on written by Tim Schafer (don't know if I'm free to say the name of the game yet): fantastic, funny and so cool. All the MGS stuff is great; the LucasArts scripts are great too. I don't often come up against a bad one. Some I can't talk about because they're not out yet.

Is there a difference

GAMEOGRAPHY

The games shown below barely scratch the surface of Jennifer Hale's impressive résumé. Other notable works include Baldur's Gate and EverQuest II for PC, as well as GameCube titles Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem, Killer 7, and P.N. 03.

QUEST FOR GLORY IV: SHADOWS OF DARKNESS
1994, PC
VOICE OF KATRINA



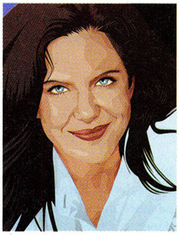
CARMEN SANDIEGO: JUNIOR DETECTIVE EDITION
1995, PC
VOICE OF IVY

140.85
MEMORY
All of the Genome Soldiers in this exercise are using it.

METAL GEAR SOLID
1998, PLAYSTATION
VOICE OF NAOMI HUNTER

METROID PRIME
2002, GAMECUBE
VOICE OF SAMUS ARAN

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
2003, XBOX
VOICE OF BASTILA SHAN



between voice acting for a game and for other projects?
There's a different kind of concentration involved because so much of the game is added later—the environment, the other actors—all of which you have to create in your mind so the scenes are as accurate as possible and so you don't miss the little details those elements bring to a game.

What's the strangest thing you've had to do as a voice actor for a game?
Aside from fight aliens, morph into other life forms, and inject nano weapons into people? [Laughs] Hmmm, I'll have to think about it. On EverQuest II we all had to do a crazy number of voices because of the huge number of characters in the game. I think I had to come up with over a dozen different characters.

Is there a particular type of character you like playing more than others?
I like action characters, the ones who kick ass and get stuff done. I like "bad" characters; they usually live and act really far outside the box.

The requisite question—do you have an all-time favorite role that you've performed?
I like different roles for different reasons. Some I love because they're characters that are so iconic, some because the style of the project lets me go with a style of acting that is really close to the hip and extremely honest, some because the character was so over-the-top and a blast to play. The team behind the project has a lot to do with it as well. So, the short answer is there isn't a single role. I've been lucky enough to have several I love.

What do you bring with you when you go to a recording session—your tools of the trade, so to speak?
My mental game, cell phone off, other distractions outside the door, a clear sense of where I fit into the whole storyline, and lots of water—hot water and room-temp. And a sweater. Some of those rooms are like refrigerators.

Do you often get recognized by fans? What are your interactions with them like?
That really only happens at conventions, which I do rarely. I find the fans are really nice and some know more about my work than I do.

How do you think you've evolved as a performer over your career?
Wow—I haven't thought about that much. Hopefully I've gotten better and I definitely have more and more fun as time goes on.

Is there any advice you can give to aspiring voice actors?
Two words: work ethic. That and never, never forget that you are just a part of the equation. The producers, writers, etc. will work on a project for months or years and you come in for a fraction of that time. Your job is to be excellent, easy to work with, do an awesome job, then let them do the huge mountain of work they have to do. Never forget the big picture, both of the story and the production. That and keep your acting skills supersharp.

Do you play video games? Do you play through the games you're involved with?
[Sighs] I'm really, really bad at it. I'd much rather be in them. Sooo not capable. [Laughs]

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film, music, or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I read all kinds of stuff: fiction, nonfiction, you name it. I watch some sci-fi, currently addicted to *Battlestar Galactica*. I'm looking forward to seeing *Watchmen*. Love a good epic like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* or the new *Batman* series. I definitely get hooked into anything science-y like the *Planet Earth* series. That was unbelievable. Especially on a huge HDTV. I don't get as much time for that stuff, though; I'm outside a lot, but I do like to travel and get to catch up with it on planes. I got hooked on *Battlestar* when I had the flu and had to sit still for a couple of days.

What are your favorite hobbies or pastimes?
Rock climbing, horseback riding, and traveling abroad. One of my favorite things I ever did was go to Thailand on a whim and volunteer for a couple of weeks in a village way far away from the beaten path.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
The power to make people understand each other instantly and completely, because when you really understand why someone does what they do you go from anger or disdain to compassion and hopefully straight to solutions. At least you go away from judgment and violence. It works on all levels, from your family to the other side of the world. We're all pretty much alike deep down. Anyway, I think we'd get a lot more done and have a lot more fun.

GAMEOGRAPHY

LIFE
PSYCHO MANTIS
998/999

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES
2004, GAMECUBE
VOICE OF NAOMI HUNTER

Power Beat
4 HITS

TALES OF SYMPHONIA
2004, GAMECUBE
VOICE OF SHEENA FUJIBAYASHI

METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION
2007, Wii
VOICE OF SAMUS ARAN

I agree.
You're overreacting.
Cut the chatter!

MASS EFFECT
2007, XBOX 360
VOICE OF COMMANDER SHEPARD (FEMALE)

METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS
2008, PLAYSTATION 3
VOICES OF NAOMI HUNTER AND LITTLE JOHN

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NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
MAY 2009

TAP INTO THE RHYTHM

With Rhythm Heaven™ and the brand-new Nintendo DSi™ system!

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NINTENDO DS
RHYTHM HEAVEN
Tap into the Rhythm!
Nintendo

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5 WINNERS!

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NINTENDO DS
RHYTHM HEAVEN
Tap into the Rhythm!
Nintendo

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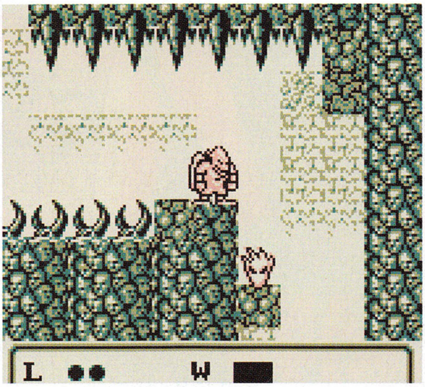
GARGOYLE'S QUEST

The ghosts and goblins are the good guys.

CAPCOM
GARGOYLE'S QUEST
GAME BOY
Nintendo

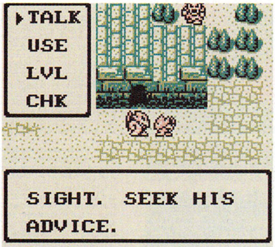
PLATFORM: GAME BOY
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
RELEASE DATE: JULY 1990
COVERED IN ISSUE: 12
NUMBER OF RED CHARACTERS COLORED GREEN ON THE BOX ART: 1



It's a Capcom game, so there's gotta be spikes in there somewhere. At least these aren't Dr. Wily's patented Insta-Kill™ spikes.

It takes a special kind of bad guy to get his own spin-off video game. Wario was able to take his role as the main antagonist of Super Mario Land 2 and turn it into his own long-running series, but such things don't happen often. That's why the world was stunned when Capcom gave Firebrand his own game, Gargoyle's Quest.

What's that? You don't know who Firebrand is? That's understandable. After all, he's not even the main villain of the series in which he appears. You probably know him as "that annoying red demon in Ghosts 'n Goblins that's guaranteed to knock off your armor 99 percent of the time." Yep—that guy. He got his own Game Boy title.



SIGHT. SEEK HIS ADVICE.

Firebrand's adventure begins when the evil King Breager (er, evil-er than Firebrand, we suppose) and his army of Destroyers attack the Ghoul Realm. Even obnoxious gargoyles don't like their home turf invaded, so our antihero sets out to save the land.

Surprisingly, Gargoyle's Quest isn't a pure platformer like the series that spawned it. Instead, it's more like Zelda II: The Adventure of Link—an adventure game that combines RPG-style elements with side-scrolling action.

Like in many RPGs, you journey around the world and through towns via overhead world maps. Triggering a random encounter takes you to a brief side-scrolling section where you must defeat all of the enemies to escape. Dungeons are complete (and sometimes quite large) platforming levels, where you may take on a boss at the end.

Other than his upgradable fire breath, Firebrand relies mainly on two things to get him through the realm: his sharp talons that allow him to cling to walls, and his bat-like wings, which give him limited flight capabilities. As you progress through the game, power-ups allow for higher jumping and longer flight times.

Despite the relative popularity of the Ghosts 'n Goblins series, Gargoyle's Quest remains fairly obscure—which is a shame since it's one of the more enjoyable adventures on the Game Boy. Track down a copy and spend a few hours exploring your dark side.

—PHIL T.

This is me when I put on my "serious face."

WHO'S THAT GHOUL?

Perhaps one of the reasons that Firebrand is a relative unknown is that he's gone through nearly as many names as games he has appeared in. Depending on the title and translation, ol' Firebrand has also been called Red Arremer, Red Reamer, and Red Devil.

The character first appeared as one of Arthur's most persistent foes in 1985's Ghosts 'n Goblins, and has shown up in every sequel since. Additionally, Gargoyle's Quest led to two sequels of its own—Gargoyle's Quest II for the NES and the outstanding Demon's Crest for the Super NES. He even became a secret boss character in the fighting game SVC Chaos: SNK vs. Capcom.

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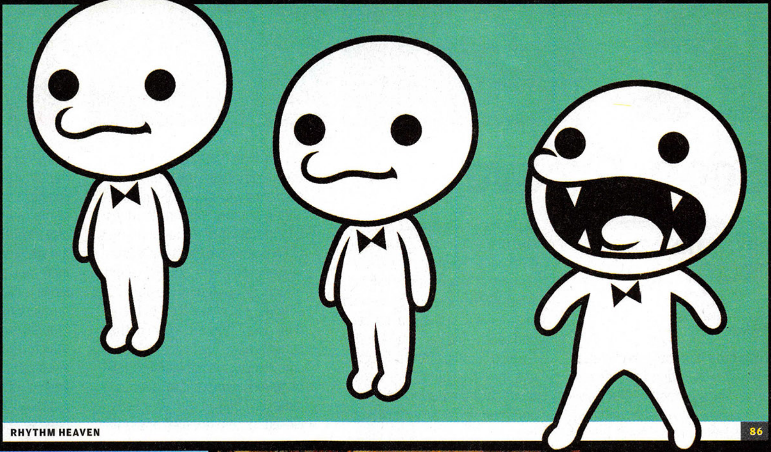
REVIEWS

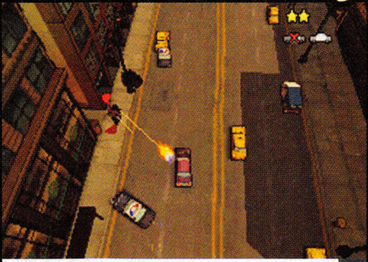
IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

Nintendo gets into a funky groove with **Rhythm Heaven**, one of the year's best new DS games.



RHYTHM HEAVEN 86

EXCITEBOTS: TRICK RACING 87



GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS 90

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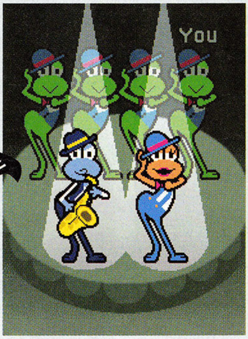
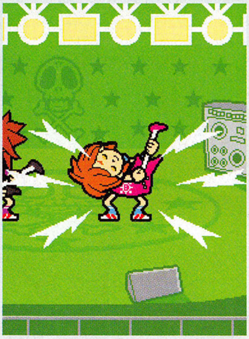
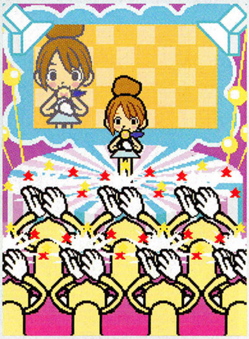






Goofy Groove

RHYTHM HEAVEN

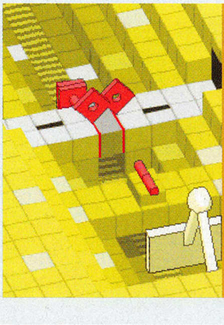
RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Let's face it: people rarely read *minigame collection* and then rush out to place a preorder. But if you pass on Rhythm Heaven, not only will you miss out on one of the few titles that does minigames right, but you'll be saying no to one of the best DS games of the year.

Developers of lackluster minigame compilations often squeeze in a wide variety of game types but rarely do any of them especially well. But Rhythm Heaven takes a page from the WarioWare series' book and offers variations on a very strong theme. You're always tapping, holding, sliding, or flicking the stylus to the rhythm of the music, no matter what charmingly ridiculous scenario a particular game puts you in. Unlike the "microgames" of the WarioWare titles, however—which are meant to last only a few seconds each—the games in Rhythm Heaven continue for the length of a short song and are proportionately more polished and enjoyable. Not every entry is solid gold, but there aren't any duds, either. From dancing with frogs to building robots to blasting space aliens, the games provide rapid-fire fun with simple, addictive hooks that are a perfect match for a game system designed to be played in spurts.

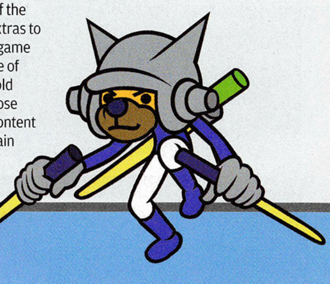
Of course, none of this would matter if the songs that the games are set to weren't any good, but these tunes are so catchy you'll be humming them for weeks. Whether it's a pop song with vocals or an on-stage guitar duet, the music infuses the offbeat scenarios with endearing personalities. Rhythm Heaven also does a fantastic job of using sound cues to communicate the required timing for each game, and the sound effects generated by the player's actions fit in perfectly with the music, as if they are a part of the composition. The masterful use of sound results in minigames that—once you know what to do—can almost be played with your eyes closed. That's very high praise for a game that's all about going with the flow of the music.



It couldn't be easier to jump right into Rhythm Heaven; not only are the stylus controls very simple (you don't use any buttons), but all of the minigames are played with the DS held sideways like a book, making it easy to kick back and relax while you tap away. But that's not to say that the minigames aren't challenging. In fact, the more of them you unlock, the more difficult they get. So while anyone can pick up Rhythm Heaven and enjoy it on a basic level, it still offers some of the toughest challenges around for skilled players. And you'll stay hooked for a long time—there are 50 minigames (half are harder versions of the initial set), and plenty of extras to unlock. Completing a minigame with no more than a couple of mistakes will earn you a gold medal, and the more of those you get, the more bonus content becomes available. The main unlockables are extra side games and digital knickknacks that aren't terribly exciting (you can flip a coin or dial a phone only so many times) but still provide a nice incentive to continue having fun with the main games. The ultimate, and longest-lasting, challenge is to earn a Perfect ranking on every minigame. It's annoying, though, that only the randomly selected game of the moment gives you three chances at a Perfect—if you make a flawless run through a game that hasn't been selected, it won't count. My only other small complaint is that Rhythm Heaven doesn't include even one multiplayer game, which is a shame given how imaginative the developers were in creating so many excellent single-player experiences.

Rhythm Heaven joins Elite Beat Agents, Nintendo's other DS rhythm game, as one of the publisher's finest titles for the handheld. Although the two titles are very different, fans of EBA's fun, quirky charm and tap-slide-type stylus action should really dig Rhythm Heaven. Both now have a permanent spot in my DS travel case, and just like EBA, Rhythm Heaven will be a force to be reckoned with at awards time.

—CHRIS SL.



WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT WOULD YOUR WEAKNESS OR FIGHTING STYLE BE IF YOU WERE A PUNCH-OUT!! OPPONENT?

Justin Cheng

Without my glasses I'm basically like Mr. Magoo, so if you break the lenses, I'm pretty much helpless.

Chris Hoffman

I'd wear a Mr. T t-shirt that would protect my body from attacks. On the other hand, I'd be wide open when Doc distracted me with a pecan pie.

Casey Loe

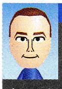
My fighting style wouldn't be fancy—just a solid peek-a-boo stance and a strong left hook. Oh, and I'd be composed entirely of flying piranhas with katanas for fins.

Scott Pelland

My glasses would be my weakness. Whenever the light glinted off the lenses, I'd be momentarily blinded and open to any punch.

Chris Shepperd

Any longtime reader should know that I'm vulnerable to dart guns, baseball bats, Klondike bars, Pichu....

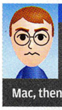


Chris Slate

I have to admit that I'd make Glass Joe look like a champ—all anyone would have to do is punch me in the gut right after I've stuffed myself with fast food at lunch.

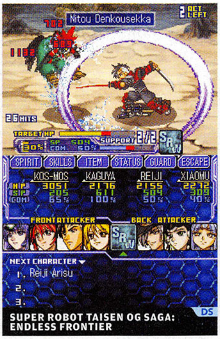
David F. Smith

I would look around, be struck with uncontrollable terror, flee the ring, and hide in the locker room. Little Mac, winner by default.



Steve Thomason

My boxing career would likely be short-lived anyway, so I'd bet heavily on Little Mac, then take the fall.



SUPER ROBOT TAISEN OG SAGA: ENDLESS FRONTIER DS

SUPER ROBOT TAISEN OG SAGA: ENDLESS FRONTIER

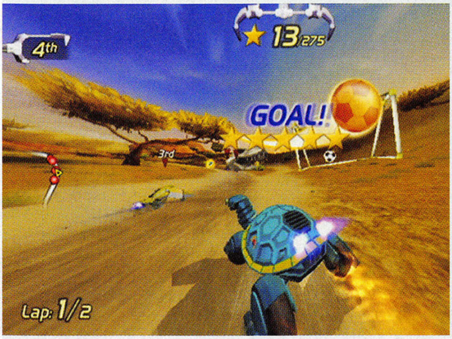
RATING: **7.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **MONOLITH SOFT**
RATING: **TEEN**

Endless Frontier is kind of like what you'd get if the Xenosaga games quit taking themselves seriously. In case you never played them, that's a compliment. Monolith Soft's first RPGs had their good points, but they badly needed to lighten up a bit.

This game is light enough to drift away in a stiff breeze. On the gameplay side of things, it's a traditional RPG with a flashy, combo-crazy action combat system. Battles play a little like a simple 2-D fighting game, where the goal is to string together the longest possible air-juggle chain. The story, meanwhile, is a self-aware thumb in the eye of the entire anime-inspired-RPG genre, an adventure full of ridiculously overdesigned cartoon characters bouncing through a plot that refuses to make any sense at all.

Some RPG fans—the kind that really liked Xenosaga—might not find the underlying joke all that funny, and generally speaking, Endless Frontier has more charm on the surface than it has depth underneath it. Still, if you've played a lot of games in this genre, it's refreshing to finally find one that's willing to crack a smile. **—DAVID S.**



Wild Ride

EXCITEBOTS: TRICK RACING

RATING: **8.0**

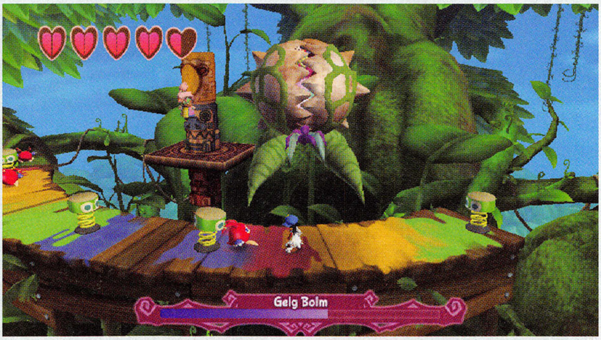
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **MONSTER GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

With vehicles designed to look like a mouse, a bat, a centipede, etc., Excitebots: Trick Racing (the sequel to Excite Truck) wears its freakiness on its sleeve. In a single lap you might knock a soccer ball into a net, bat a home run, go fishing, ram through bowling pins, throw a pie at a giant clown face, and speed along a zip line to collect food to make a sandwich, all while rushing forward at F-Zero-type speeds, performing stunts, and turbo-boosting into some of the biggest and most expletive-inducing jumps ever seen in a racing game. All of these crazy elements work together surprisingly well; once you get into the flow of things, you'll string together stunts and events into impressive-looking laps that are almost as fun to watch as they are to play.

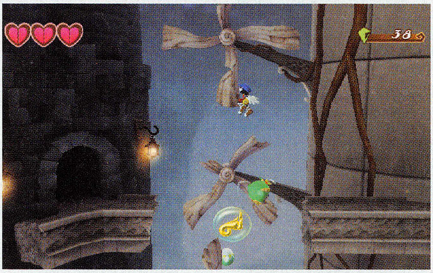
The game's motion controls work great with either the Wii Remote or the Wii Wheel, and are a little more forgiving than in Excite Truck. And although the points needed to unlock new bots and other items are earned at an annoyingly slow pace, the variety and plenitude of unlockables provides a nice incentive to play for a long time. Most of the in-race minigames (like the aforementioned bowling) are also featured in extra modes that, like the main game, can be played with one or two players. Six-player Wi-Fi racing is also supported, but we weren't able to give it a go in time for this review.

We rated Excite Truck an 8.5 as a Wii launch title, and although Excitebots is better in every way, it scores a tad lower due to today's stiffer competition (namely Mario Kart Wii). Excitebots is a required title for Excite Truck fans, and if you missed out on the first game or afforded it only a cursory look, I strongly urge you to give Excitebots more of a chance. **—CHRIS SL.**

1st
70/225
GREAT FISH!
Lap 1/2
Turbo



Dream Come True



KLONOA

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **PAON/KLONOA WORKS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

If you like platformers, put this magazine down right now and rush out to preorder or buy Klonoa. Hurry up! OK, now that you've got that taken care of, you're going to find out why you just made one of the best purchases of your gaming life.

First, Klonoa is one of the finest, most endearing platformers ever made. Second, this Wii version gives you the chance to play that platformer even if you missed the game's original release on PlayStation more than 10 years ago (or its 2001 sequel). And third, publisher Namco Bandai isn't content to merely bring back the franchise on Wii; the game and its titular, catlike, floppy-eared hero are arguably better than ever.

At the heart of Klonoa's appeal is a purely satisfying core play mechanic: the ability to grab enemies with your Wind Bullet, then hurl them as projectiles or use them to double-jump. It sounds simple—and it is—but the levels and enemy patterns built around the concept are brilliant, with foes and obstacles placed to provide maximum fun. Some mild nonlinearity and hints of puzzle elements add just enough depth to keep the 2.5-D gameplay constantly exciting, yet the game never strays from the fulfilling run-jump-float-grab-throw action.

The game is beautiful, as well, living up to its dreamworld premise with vibrant, majestic visuals that are bursting with joyous imagination. The PS1 Klonoa used CG cut-scenes to tell its story, and it's no exaggeration to say that the real-time graphics found throughout the Wii game put its predecessor's CG to shame. The music is incredibly catchy, too, and even the new English voices aren't half bad. The Phantomilian language option better conveys the game's sense of whimsy, but at least there's a viable alternative for those who want it.

The developers haven't skimped on control options either. Although I preferred playing the game with the Classic Controller or one of the other traditional configurations, the Wii-Remote-and-Nunchuk method works well and lets you gesture to throw enemies. Klonoa's new enemy-slowing whirlwind move—activated by shaking the Nunchuk back and forth (or via a button if you're not using the Nunchuk)—doesn't seem like a necessary addition to your hero's repertoire, but it doesn't detract from the gameplay either.

Of course, no evaluation of Klonoa would be complete without mentioning the game's story. Though it unfolds subtly, the touching tale of friendship is surprisingly powerful, and the bittersweet ending (which hasn't changed from the PS1 version, visuals notwithstanding) has brought a tear to many a gamer's eye.

If I have any complaints about Klonoa, it's that it's now much easier to see that ending; your health bar is nearly twice as long as it was in the original game, and despite earlier reports to the contrary, there's no way to raise the difficulty. Fortunately, it matters little. Hardcore players will still be able to test themselves by playing the Extra Vision bonus stage and tackling the insanely tough challenge rooms you'll encounter when you play the game in the unlockable mirror mode.

Underappreciated games like Klonoa rarely get a second chance at success, so take advantage of the opportunity and allow yourself to experience (or re-experience) a platforming classic. **—CHRIS H.**

Volcano Scissor Lake
Time 1:25
Victory :
Destroy the switches in order!
05
Lance
× 00

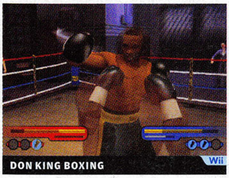
STEAL PRINCESS DS

MAJOR MINOR'S MAJESTIC MARCH Wii

MAJOR MINOR'S MAJESTIC MARCH Wii

Excuse me, officer

BROKEN SWORD: SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS—THE DIRECTOR'S CUT Wii



DON KING BOXING Wii

3rd
-7,175G
Nu or Used.
HP 27/ 330 Lv29
AT 93 DF 92
MG 27 SP 30
INFO
4th Azelea Ya Lv28 0G
2nd Chi Blast Lv58 625,970G
1st Ouch? Lv59 4,069,147G
WEEKS PASSED 73 SAT
MOVE
VIEW
BAG
MENU

DOKAPON JOURNEY DS

STEAL PRINCESS

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **CLIMAX ENTERTAINMENT**
RATING: **EVERYONE 10+**

Although Steal Princess comes billed as an action-adventure, in spirit it's more like a puzzle game. Essentially it's a series of the clever trap-laden rooms that show up in a Legend of Zelda dungeon—use the right items, make the right jumps, kill all the bad guys, and move on to the next room.

The trouble is, a lot of these puzzles are downright cruel. Many levels have to be solved in a very specific, scripted sequence, and if you take just one wrong step, the only option is to hit Retry and start over. That's not quite as frustrating as it may sound—most of the levels are designed to be cleared in a couple of minutes—but it's frustrating enough to make Steal Princess a lot less fun than it could have been. **—DAVID S.**

MAJOR MINOR'S MAJESTIC MARCH

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **NANAON-SHA/DREAMS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

From a gameplay perspective, Major Minor's Majestic March—the latest rhythm game from PaRappa the Rapper creators Masaya Matsuura and Rodney Alan Greenblat—doesn't have a whole lot going on. The action involves little more than moving the Wii Remote up and down at a consistent pace while waving left or right to grab power-ups and add new members to your marching troupe—not exactly gripping stuff. There are times when you must raise or lower the tempo, and you have to avoid detrimental pickups, but other than engaging in occasional Remote-waving intermissions, that's about as deep as MMMM gets. Fortunately, like most of Matsuura's and Greenblat's works, the game is loaded with quirky charm, whimsical places, and lively, inspired visuals. Admittedly, the authentic marching tunes aren't as memorable as the music in some of Matsuura's other games, but the concept of a world that revolves around marching bands is weird enough to be intriguing, and the idea that you're stomping through cities, factories, and parks while carrying a magic, ceaselessly nagging marching baton that evidently contains the reincarnated spirit of your great-great-grandmother is strangely endearing. That doesn't excuse the game's brevity, however; you can probably beat it in an hour or so. Sure, you can play through it again in unlockable tougher difficulty settings (which feature more band members and additional story elements) and partake in some fun multiplayer modes, but getting access to the best stuff only after finishing the game once is an odd design choice. Major Minor's Majestic March certainly isn't the next coming of PaRappa, but young gamers—and the young at heart—should get a kick out of it. **—CHRIS H.**

BROKEN SWORD: SHADOW OF THE TEMPLARS—THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **REVOLUTION**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Broken Sword may be old, but it's still good. The game's point-and-click adventuring is a perfect fit for the Wii Remote controls, and thanks to an updated look (featuring character designs by Dave Gibbons of *Watchmen* fame), Wii-specific challenges, and new story elements, it feels somewhat fresh, too. The new content, in which you play as female lead Nicole Collard, is plentiful early on, but unfortunately that arc doesn't get a satisfying conclusion before giving way to predominantly familiar territory. The item-based puzzles, however, are still great head-scratching stuff; there's even a handy in-game hint system for anyone who needs it. And though the game looks beautiful for the most part, it's oddly inconsistent; there are a few strange instances of low-res visuals and cheap animation. **—CHRIS H.**

DON KING BOXING

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **2K CHINA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

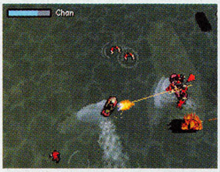
Given the titular promoter's penchant for hyperbolic flourish, it's a bit ironic that Don King Boxing is so splendiferously mediocre. I do love the conceit behind the story mode; it's presented like a documentary, recounting your fighter's rise to greatness with interview clips interspersed between bouts. The way it integrates classic situations from throughout boxing history is pretty cool, as well. But the core gameplay simply isn't main-event material. With so little technique required for success, flailing your arms gets old quickly. Wii Balance Board support only adds frustration to the tedium. Wait for Punch-Out!! if you're hankering for some fisticuffs. **—STEVE T.**

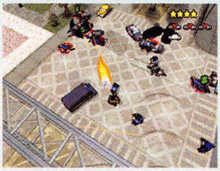
DOKAPON JOURNEY

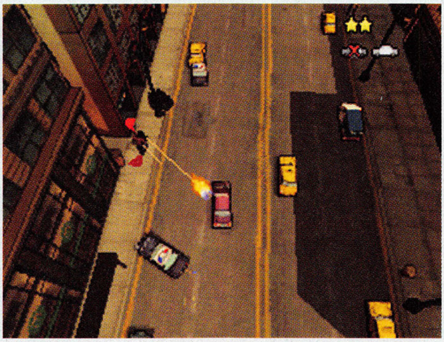
RATING: 4.0

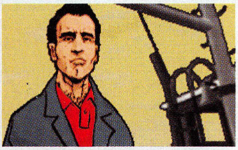
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **STING**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

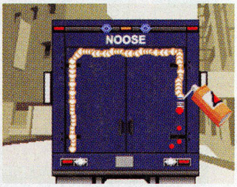
As you might expect, facing computer-controlled opponents in an RPG-themed board game is a dreadful bore. Dokapon Journey is fun only when you can get together a few friends, and even then, the novelty of the game's cute mix of RPG and board-game concepts wears thin after an hour or two, when you'll tire of having nothing to do during other players' turns, and of having your own plans ruined by a roll of the dice. There is some interesting strategy at the heart of Dokapon Journey, but being unable to enter the weapon shop because you rolled a 6 instead of 5 or having to spend three turns resting at the castle because you countered when you should have blocked simply isn't fun. **—CASEY L.**



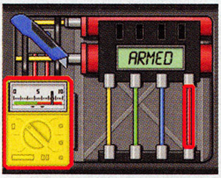


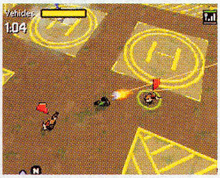






Crime Time





GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS

RATING: 9.0

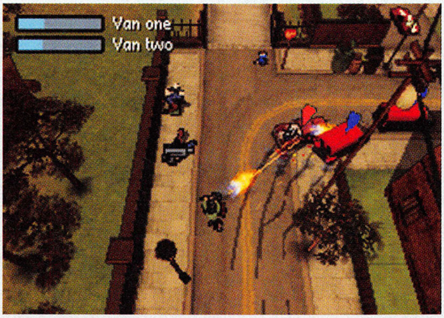
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ROCKSTAR GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ROCKSTAR LEEDS/ROCKSTAR NORTH**
ESRB: **MATURE**

Controversial content, enjoyable missions, and pushing boundaries are all things the Grand Theft Auto series is known for, and Chinatown Wars is no different in that regard; the game has everything you would expect from a GTA title, in a convenient handheld package. It's a stunning achievement: you've got almost the entirety of the bustling world of the New York-inspired Liberty City to play around in (sans the New Jersey-esque Alderney), with none of the technical limitations (such as draw-in or frame-rate issues) you might expect from cramming such a large sandbox onto a DS card. Sure, some compromises had to be made—the isometric perspective is reminiscent of the early, pre-GTA III days of the franchise, the radio stations are limited, and the voice acting is nonexistent—but the DS-exclusive features certainly help offset some of these issues. For example, the touch-screen-centric minigames you play when hot-wiring a car or assembling a sniper rifle are welcome additions and give the game more interactivity than any previous GTA.

As Triad member Huang Lee, you carjack, drive, and shoot your way to the truth behind your debauched father's murder in order to avenge his death and your own attempted murder and to reclaim the lost sword Yu Jian. Along the way, you meet a colorful cast of characters, such as Chan Jaoming, the hilariously delusional narcissistic son of Triad boss Hsin Jaoming. (The characters could have come alive even more—and the dialogue would probably seem slightly less over-the-top and in-your-face—if they were fully voiced instead of speaking only in text boxes, but it works as is.) These are all bad, bad people—yourself included, as Huang is not nearly as morally ambiguous as, say, GTA IV protagonist Niko Bellic—but you expect to get your hands dirty when you play GTA. (Of course, Chinatown Wars pushes the idea of being a bad guy a bit further with its illicit drug-buying and -selling side game; suffice it to say that this one is not for kids.)

There is some punishment for committing crimes, of course; cops are everywhere and are as overzealous as ever. Unlike in previous games, you have to slam cop cars into objects to disable them to lower your Wanted level. This is a blessing, as you can quickly lose the cops if you're good at ramming them. But the police are relentless otherwise. It can get a little frustrating, particularly when you're on a mission and have to restart from the very beginning, but thankfully most missions are pretty short. (Though don't think you can simply breeze through them; some are tough, especially when you're tasked with protecting a not-so-intelligent AI-controlled character.) Another annoyance is the combat, which carries over the lock-on issue from the previous GTAs—that is to say, you don't always lock on to the closest, most pressing threat to your safety, and that can get you killed.

But these are relatively small qualms when the rest of the game is so well developed. Although Chinatown Wars is shorter than the other GTA iterations (about six to seven hours to get through the main story), the plentiful side activities (Unique Stunt Jumps, and Rampage and OddJob missions—just as you'd expect from any other game in the series) and multiplayer modes, as well as the ability to replay completed story missions, will keep you occupied for a good while. Most of all, Chinatown Wars succeeds because, despite its aesthetic differences from the other games in the series, it captures that great GTA feel. **—JUSTIN C.**



27
FREE PLAY
Wii

GUILTY GEAR XX ACCENT CORE PLUS

TOUCH MECHANIC

Venom Dragon x 2/2
Venom Dragon x 3/3
Look
Fight
Run
Gustav
Emile
Friedrich
Kurfuerst
DS

THE DARK SPIRE

GUILTY GEAR XX ACCENT CORE PLUS

RATING: **7.5**

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **ARC SYSTEM WORKS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

If you're hankering for a 2-D fighting game on Wii, Aksys Games has just the thing for you: Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus (a sort of revision to Guilty Gear XX). It's an easy-to-learn, hard-to-master game (very hard, actually; the fighting system is almost overwhelmingly deep) that looks and plays great. Of course, this is assuming you've got a Classic or GameCube controller on hand, as the Wii Remote-and-Nunchuk control scheme is frustratingly imprecise. The addition of the Story mode is welcome since it gives the single-player game some longevity, but I can't help but feel that a true sequel to Guilty Gear XX is long overdue. **—JUSTIN C.**

TOUCH MECHANIC

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ASPYR**
DEVELOPER: **KANDO GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It seems like a good idea to extend Trauma Center-style gameplay to other motifs; that is, until someone actually does it. In Touch Mechanic, you're a young grease monkey trying to learn the ropes to become a stud repair guy for a racing garage. The premise isn't bad, but the cars you repair have little to do with the storyline; the narrative elements in the Trauma Center games are what give weight to your actions. Touch Mechanic's controls work well, but you just can't do enough to the cars: replacing mufflers and changing brake pads just doesn't have the same cachet as transplanting a kidney. Further, the developers should have spent more time under the hood on the create-a-vehicle component and the side story about the illegal street race gone wrong. **—CHRIS SH.**

THE DARK SPIRE

RATING: **5.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

No-frills dungeon-crawling is on tap in Atlus's The Dark Spire, which finds your four-man party battling fiendishly difficult enemies in turn-based skirmishes within a massive tower. Due to the extreme challenge, you'll likely inch through the labyrinth in brief spurts, often scurrying back to town amidst endless level-grinding to recover supplies or revive fallen comrades. Aside from decent *Sin City*-style pseudo-3D backdrops (viewed from a first-person perspective), The Dark Spire seems content to simply mimic the age-old games that inspired it, leaving a drab experience that takes little advantage of the DS hardware (menu issues annoy) and rarely rises above the level of sufficiency. Employ the optional 8-bit-esque wire-frame visual aesthetic and it'll *really* feel like a relic, for better or worse. **—ANDREW H.**

Third Time's a Charm

POKÉMON PLATINUM VERSION

RATING: **9.0**

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **GAME FREAK inc.**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Like an old friend telling a new tale, much of a Pokémon game's magic derives from familiar things. The core activities—catching, training, and battling Pokémon—are tweaked and improved with each subsequent version, but the series' appeal remains unchanged. For me, the hook is the Pokémon themselves. They are brimming with promise, and it's up to you to make the most of their potential and build a winning team. If Pokémon Platinum Version had done no more than be true to its legacy I would have counted it as a success, but happily for fans, Platinum offers lots more.

As the third version set in the Sinnoh region, Platinum's story is similar to the one revealed in Pokémon Diamond and Pokémon Pearl Versions. New characters smooth out some of the narrative wrinkles from Diamond and Pearl, and the central threads of Team Galactic's plot are more clear. Further refinements can be found throughout the game: additional wild Pokémon, several updated Gyms, and new animations to perk up the arrival of Pokémon as they're tossed into battle. One of the biggest changes is the key role played by the Legendary Pokémon Giratina.

But Platinum's tastiest novelties are reserved for its community features. The Wi-Fi Plaza offers minigames and activities and the chance for players from around the world to mingle and chat. An updated Global Terminal incorporates Wii messaging and a new video-sharing feature. And for players who've defeated the Pokémon League Champion, the Battle Frontier provides ongoing challenges—such as a chance to compete against top teams from around the world.

Just like the many Pokémon that evolve as they gain experience, Pokémon Platinum is the product of an evolutionary path leading back to the first Pokémon games. It is everything a Pokémon experience should be, and more. **—SCOTT P.**

[REVIEWS ARCHIVE]

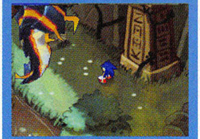
We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes

Last issue we reviewed M-rated Wii title MadWorld; it's awesome, and we strongly urge you to buy it (if you're of age). We reviewed lots of other great games, too: Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume (9.0), Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure (8.5), Peggle Dual Shot (8.5), Avalon Code (8.5), Puzzle Quest: Galactrix (8.0), and Gardening Mama (8.0).

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Wii				
AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Alone in the Dark	4.0	Atari	232	M
• Animal Crossing: City Folk	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Backyard Baseball '09	N/A	Atari	231	E
Boogie SuperStar	7.0	Electronic Arts	235	E10+
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templars—The Director's Cut	N/A	Ubisoft	240	T
Brothers in Arms: Double Time	7.0	Ubisoft	235	M
• Call of Duty: World at War	8.0	Activision	237	M
• Castlevania Judgment	7.0	Konami	236	T
Cate West: The Vanishing Files	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Celebrity Sports Showdown	4.5	EA Sports	235	E
Cooking Mama World Kitchen	6.5	Majesco	236	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Dance Dance Revolution Hottest Party 2	8.0	Konami	234	E10+
de Blob	8.0	THQ	234	E
Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop	N/A	Capcom	240	M
Deadly Creatures	7.5	THQ	239	T
Death Jr.: Root of Evil	7.0	Eidos	230	T
Dokapon Kingdom	8.5	Atlus	235	E10+
Don King Boxing	N/A	2K Sports	240	T
Emergency Heroes	N/A	Ubisoft	230	E10+
FaceBreaker K.O. Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	235	T
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	7.5	System 3	233	E
FIFA Soccer 09 All-Play	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.0	Square Enix	240	E10+
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	7.5	Square Enix	231	E10+
• Fishing Master: World Tour	7.5	Hudson	238	E
• Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	7.0	RedOctane	232	T
• Guitar Hero: Metallica	N/A	Activision	240	T
• Guitar Hero World Tour	8.5	Activision	236	T
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	6.5	Natsume	233	E
The House of the Dead: Overkill	8.0	Sega	239	M
The Incredible Hulk	3.5	Sega	231	T
The King of Fighters: The Orochi Saga	8.0	SNK Playmore	235	T
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.0	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E10+
Line Rider 2: Unbound	5.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Lost in Blue: Shipwrecked	6.5	Konami	235	E10+
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
• Madden NFL 09 All-Play	9.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
MadWorld	9.0	Sega	240	M
Major League Baseball 2K9	6.0	2K Sports	240	E
• Marble Saga: Kororinpa	7.5	Hudson	240	E
Mario Super Sluggers	7.5	Nintendo	233	E
MLB Power Pros 2008	7.0	2K Sports	232	E
Monster Lab	6.5	Eidos	236	E10+
MotoGP	4.0	Capcom	240	E
Mushroom Men: The Spore Wars	8.0	Gamecock	236	E10+
MySims Kingdom	7.5	Electronic Arts	235	E
MySims Party	5.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	8.0	Tomy	235	T
NASCAR Kart Racing	6.0	EA Sports	238	E
• NBA Live 09 All-Play	4.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
NCAA Football 09 All-Play	5.0	Electronic Arts	232	E
Need for Speed Undercover	6.5	Electronic Arts	236	T
Neighborhood Games	N/A	THQ	238	E
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	N/A	Capcom	236	E
New Play Control! Mario Power Tennis	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
New Play Control! Pikmin	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
NHL 2K9	7.0	2K Sports	234	E10+
Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers	6.5	D3Publisher	240	M
Order Up!	7.0	Zoo Games	232	E
Pop Star Guitar	N/A	XS Games	236	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2009	N/A	Konami	240	E
• Quantum of Solace	5.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	5.5	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Ready 2 Rumble Revolution	5.0	Atari	240	T
Rock Band	8.0	MTV Games	231	T
• Rock Band 2	9.0	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 1	6.5	MTV Games	232	T
Rock Band Track Pack Volume 2	N/A	MTV Games	237	T
Rock Revolution	4.5	Konami	235	T
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory Frontier	7.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	7.0	Tecmo	236	T
Sam & Max Season One	7.0	The Adventure Company	233	T
• Samba de Amigo	9.0	Sega	234	E
Shaun White Snowboarding: Road Trip	7.0	Ubisoft	236	E10+
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
SimCity Creator	6.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Skate It	6.0	Electronic Arts	237	E
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	8.5	SNK Playmore	233	T
Sonic and the Black Knight	8.0	Sega	239	E10+
Sonic Unleashed	8.0	Sega	236	E10+
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	6.5	Activision	236	T
SPRay	3.0	Tecmo	235	E10+
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Lightsaber Duels	4.0	LucasArts	236	T
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	7.5	LucasArts	233	T
Tales of Symphonia: Dawn of the New World	8.0	Namco Bandai	236	T
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	7.0	Ubisoft	238	M
• Tiger Woods PGA Tour All-Play	8.5	Electronic Arts	233	E
TNA Impact!	5.0	Midway	235	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	7.0	Eidos	236	T
Ultimate Band	6.0	Disney	235	E
Ultimate Shooting Collection	N/A	UFO	237	E
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
Wario Land: Shake It!	8.0	Nintendo	234	E
We Cheer	6.0	Namco Bandai	235	E10+
• We Love Golf!	8.5	Capcom	231	E10+
We Ski and Snowboard	6.5	Namco Bandai	239	E
• Wii Music	N/A	Nintendo	235	E
WordJong Party	N/A	Destineer	238	E
• WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	8.0	THQ	236	T
NINTENDO DS				
Age of Empires: Mythologies	7.0	THQ	236	E10+
Arkanoid DS	6.5	Square Enix	230	E
Avalon Code	8.5	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	E10+
AWAY: Shuffle Dungeon	7.0	Majesco	235	E10+
Bangai-O Spirits	8.0	D3PA	232	E10+

REVIEWER NOTES



SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

Turn-based role-playing is about as far from traditional Sonic platforming as you can get, but the hedgehog has made the transition very well. BioWare has done a fantastic job expanding upon the Sonic characters' personalities and retaining their trademark abilities while fleshing out their universe. The purely touch-driven interface is well-implemented, too, especially in battle. **—CHRIS H.**

WARIO LAND: SHAKE IT!

Since my review I've worked to complete each stage's bonus challenges; they really add a lot of extra play value! **—CHRIS SL.**

ONECHANBARA: BIKINI ZOMBIE SLAYERS

While the Mature-rated Onechanbara: Bikini Zombie Slayers isn't what I'd call "great," it does have its charms. For one, it's undeniably cheesy in a good way. Plus, slicing and dicing hordes of zombies is always fun, and you can play the game cooperatively (though not in the story mode, sadly), which helps offset the fact that the game is pretty repetitive overall. **—JUSTIN C.**

Big Bang Mini	8.5	SouthPeak	237	E
Bleach: Dark Souls	8.5	Sega	234	T
Blue Dragon Plus	8.0	Ignition	239	E
Boing! Docomodake DS	7.0	Ignition	239	E
Brain Quest Grades 3 & 4	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Brain Quest Grades 5 & 6	N/A	Electronic Arts	235	E
Broken Sword: Shadow of the Templar—The Director's Cut	N/A	Ubisoft	240	T
Cake Mania 2	6.5	Majesco	230	E
• Call of Duty: World at War	N/A	Activision	236	T
Carnival Games	4.5	2K Games	231	E
• Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	8.0	Konami	235	T
The Chase: Felix Meets Felicity	5.0	Atari	238	E
Chrono Trigger	9.0	Square Enix	236	E10+
Civilization Revolution	7.5	2K Games	231	E10+
Code Lyoko: Fall of Xana	N/A	The Game Factory	230	E
Crash: Mind over Mutant	N/A	Activision	235	E
Disgaea DS	7.5	NIS America	233	T
Don King Boxing	N/A	2K Sports	240	T
Dragon Ball: Origins	7.0	Atari	235	E
Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen	7.5	Square Enix	233	E10+
Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride	8.5	Square Enix	239	E
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob Squarepants Edition	7.0	THQ	234	E
Elebits: The Adventures of Kai and Zero	7.0	Konami	237	E
Emergency! Disaster Rescue Squad	N/A	Destineer	240	E10+
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	8.5	Atlus	230	E10+
Exit DS	7.5	Square Enix	234	E
Ferrari Challenge Trofeo Pirelli	6.0	System 3	233	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Echoes of Time	6.5	Square Enix	240	E10+
Final Fantasy IV	9.0	Square Enix	231	E10+
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift	7.0	Square Enix	230	E10+
• Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon	8.5	Nintendo	239	E10+
Flower, Sun, and Rain	6.0	Marvelous Entertainment USA/XSEED	240	T
Gardening Mama	8.0	Majesco	240	E
Gauntlet	7.5	Eidos	236	T
• GRID	8.5	Codemasters	230	E
Guitar Hero On Tour	8.0	Activision	232	E10+
Guitar Hero On Tour: Decades	7.0	Activision	237	E10+
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	7.0	Natsume	231	E
Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure	8.0	Electronic Arts	240	E
The Incredible Hulk	7.5	Sega	231	E10+
Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns	5.0	Atlus	232	T
Kirby Super Star Ultra	9.0	Nintendo	234	E
Kung Fu Panda	N/A	Activision	230	E10+
Kung Fu Panda: Legendary Warriors	N/A	Activision	236	E10+
Legacy of Ys: Books I & II	7.5	Atlus	238	T
The Legend of Kage 2	8.0	Square Enix	234	E10+
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	N/A	Activision	236	E
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	7.5	Warner Bros.	235	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	7.5	LucasArts	230	E
Line Rider 2: Unbound	6.0	Inxile	234	E
Little League World Series Baseball 2008	N/A	Activision	232	E
Little Red Riding Hood's Zombie BBQ	5.0	Destineer	235	T
Lock's Quest	7.0	THQ	234	E
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Conductor	6.5	Eidos	230	E
The Lord of the Rings: Conquest	5.0	Electronic Arts	238	E10+
Luminous Arc 2	7.0	Atlus	236	T
Lux-Pain	4.0	Ignition	240	T
Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa	N/A	Activision	236	E
Madden NFL 09	N/A	Electronic Arts	232	E
Master of the Monster Lair	6.5	Atlus	235	E10+
• Mega Man Star Force 2	7.0	Capcom	230	E
Metal Slug 7	7.5	Ignition	236	T
Mister Slime	6.0	SouthPeak	230	E
Monster Lab	8.0	Eidos	236	E10+
Moon	7.5	Mastiff	236	T
The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor	N/A	Vivendi Games	231	T
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	5.0	Gamecock	236	E
My DoItAll	N/A	Tomy	239	E
My World, My Way	7.0	Atlus	239	E
MySims Party	N/A	Electronic Arts	240	E
Mystery Case Files: MillionHeir	6.5	Nintendo	234	E
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	N/A	Majesco	232	E10+
• Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	6.5	Tomy	234	E10+
Neopets Puzzle Adventure	6.0	Capcom	236	E
• New International Track and Field	8.0	Konami	232	E10+
Ninjatown	8.0	SouthPeak	235	E
Peggle Dual Shot	8.5	PopCap	240	E
Personal Trainer: Cooking	N/A	Nintendo	237	E
Personal Trainer: Math	N/A	Nintendo	239	E
• Pokémon Ranger: Shadows of Almia	8.0	Nintendo	236	E
Pop Cutie! Street Fashion Simulation	6.0	Koei	233	E
Populous	7.0	XSEED	234	T
• Prey the Stars	5.5	Koei	234	E10
Prince of Persia: The Fallen King	7.0	Ubisoft	237	E
Princess on Ice	N/A	Aksys	235	E
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	8.0	D3Publisher	240	E10+
Quantum of Solace	6.0	Activision	237	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E10+
Retro Game Challenge	8.0	XSEED	237	RP
Robocalypse	7.5	Tecmo	235	E10+
Rock Revolution	5.0	Konami	235	E10+
Rubik's World	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Rune Factory 2: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	237	E
Shaun the Sheep	4.0	D3Publisher	235	E
Shaun White Snowboarding	N/A	Ubisoft	236	E
SimAnimals	N/A	Electronic Arts	238	E
• Skate It	5.5	Electronic Arts	237	E
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	8.0	Sega	234	E
Soul Bubbles	6.5	Eidos	230	E
Space Chimps	N/A	Brash	231	E
Space Invaders Extreme	8.0	Square Enix	230	E
• Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	8.0	Disney	235	E10+
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	N/A	Activision	235	E10+
Spore Creatures	8.0	Electronic Arts	234	E
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Jedi Alliance	6.0	LucasArts	236	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	6.0	LucasArts	233	T
Suikoden: Tierkreis	7.0	Konami	240	E10+
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	N/A	Namco Bandai	230	E
• Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	6.0	Tecmo	235	E
Theresia	N/A	Aksys	235	M
Time Hollow	7.0	Konami	234	T
Tokyo Beat Down	6.0	Atlus	240	T
• Tom Clancy's EndWar	N/A	Ubisoft	236	T
Tomb Raider Underworld	N/A	Eidos	236	T
Tony Hawk's Motion	4.0	Activision	237	E
Tornado	6.0	Ignition	234	E
TrackMania DS	7.0	Atlus	240	E
Transformers Animated: The Game	7.0	Activision	235	E
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	8.5	Atlus	231	T
Unsolved Crimes	4.5	Empire	234	T
Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume	9.0	Square Enix	240	T
• Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	7.0	THQ	234	E
WALL*E	N/A	THQ	231	E
What's Cooking? Jamie Oliver	N/A	Atari	235	E
World Championship Games	N/A	The Game Factory	240	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	4.0	THQ	236	T
Zenses: Oceans	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zenses: Rainforest	N/A	The Game Factory	236	E
Zubo	6.5	Electronic Arts	240	E10+

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FALLEN KING

As a longtime fan of the Prince of Persia series, I found The Fallen King to be strictly "meh" material. The story, graphics, and pretty much everything else are just mediocre. I was, however, impressed by the touch controls, which the game uses exclusively to run, jump, fight, etc. However, even that aspect of the game has issues, as your character doesn't always act as you intended. And what's with all the slowdown? —**CHRIS SL.**

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

The House of the Dead games are always great M-rated fun—especially when played with a buddy—but Overkill is the series' best, thanks in part to its awesome grindhouse style. —**JUSTIN C.**

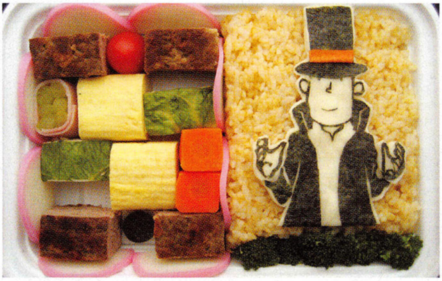
MADWORLD

As longtime readers will know, MadWorld received quite a bit of coverage in these pages over the past year. Fortunately, the final game does not disappoint. Striking black-and-white visuals, uniquely satisfying motion controls, and heaping helpings of macabre creativity equate to a must-buy for anyone 17 years of age or older. —**STEVE T.**

FANDOM

Play with Your Food

Complete game-inspired meals that are completely amazing.



To those who pack a lunch for work or school: wouldn't you rather eat one of these intricately designed bento boxes than whatever resides in your brown bag? The pictured meals come courtesy of 34-year-old Anna Y. from Brooklyn, New York, who works as a translator and creative producer at a postproduction company. Since last fall, Anna has been re-creating some of her favorite characters and sequences from video games, including numerous Nintendo classics.

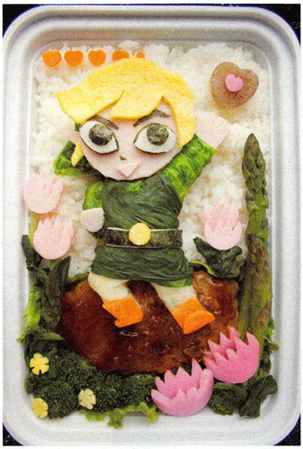
Anna makes the boxes for her boyfriend to eat, but when it comes to designing meals based on video games, she prefers ones based on games that they're both interested in. "We both love video games, so it just makes sense for me to make video game-themed bento," she says. "But it's really hard to make a bento of a video game I've never played, so all video games I picked for bento are something that we've both played and enjoyed." Since making her first themed box last September, Anna has been blogging about each box on her website (annathered.wordpress.com), supplementing each post with detailed images and how-to guides for others to use as a resource.

In her first few weeks of themed bento-making, incredible edible representations of Link, Cooking Mama, Professor Layton, a Rabbid (from Rayman Raving Rabbids), and a battle from Super Smash Bros. Brawl emerged from her kitchen and have drawn rave reviews from online readers and, undoubtedly, a bit of drool from hungry gamers. Anna says each box requires about an hour of planning and sketching, and then another hour of cooking and preparation the night before it all comes together. With everything prepared, she can then wake up and build the box in the morning, which she says can take up to three hours, depending on the complexity of the design.

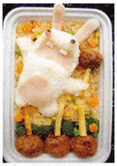
Not only the little details in each box amaze, but also the sheer number of different foods used to create each scene. In the Toon Link box, a bed of rice sets the stage for a background composed of Japanese Hamburg, broccoli, and asparagus. Link's body is made from egg salad wrapped in microwaved lettuce and spinach; his head is made from egg sheet and the little details on his person are designed with carrot, cheese, seaweed, turkey, fish cake, and fake sausage. Talk about a diverse, complete meal!

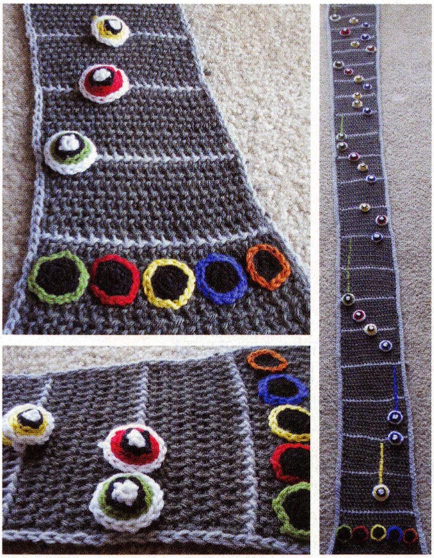
In addition to boxes modeled on games for Nintendo systems, Anna has created bento boxes based on games for other platforms, such as BioShock and Portal, as well as anime films from director Hayao Miyazaki, Disney/Pixar's *WALL-E*, and the book *Where the Wild Things Are*. Sadly, she wouldn't give us any clues about what to expect next. "Everyone asks me this, but since I keep my bento a surprise for my boyfriend, I really can't tell what I'm going to make next," explains Anna. "All I know is that it'll always be something geeky and nerdy."

—ANDREW H.



Check out Anna's website for even more pictures, including one of a Tingle bento box.





FANDOM

Crocheting Rocks!

A creative way to keep rocking while staying warm.

This excellent six-foot scarf comes to us from Renée White, a 26-year-old blogger from Cullman, Alabama, who describes it as "a combination of two of my favorite things: Guitar Hero and yarn." And don't think those buttons are just randomly placed—the scarf depicts a riff from the Queen song "Killer Queen," featured in the original Guitar Hero game.

White says the project took about two months of steady work to complete, with one and a half skeins of dark-gray yarn utilized for the scarf, as well as a few feet each of the seven other colors featured in the project. Not only did she publish images of the finished product on her blog, www.thedomesticscientist.com, but she's also posted a tutorial to help aspiring scarf-makers create their own. For White, the hardest part was picking a song from the extensive Guitar Hero track listing; second hardest was making the colored notes. "Those little buttons were a pain," she admits. "That got pretty tedious."

Surprisingly, White has been crocheting for only about eight months, and started because she wanted to create a soft case that wouldn't scratch the exterior of her Nintendo DS. However, she's created a slew of other game-related crafts and goodies, including Guitar Hero cupcakes, a cross-stitched Chocobo (from Final Fantasy) pillow, a Space Invaders guitar strap, and even a Tetris theme for her closet.

Along with Guitar Hero, White is currently a fan of Rock Band and Advance Wars: Days of Ruin, and says she tries to play Wii Fit every day. Next up for White is either an apron or a wallet adorned with the Nook's Cranny logo from Animal Crossing, and it's unlikely to be the last game-related craft we see from her. "There are countless other games I'd like to pay homage to," she adds. "I haven't done any Zelda crafts yet. I should remedy that." —**ANDREW H.**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

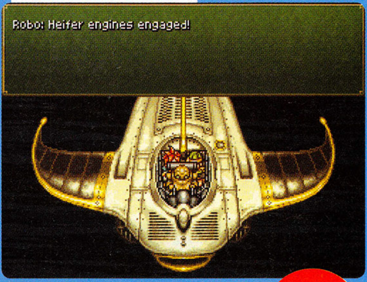
Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., Suite 510, Brisbane, CA 94005. We'll run the best stuff in this section.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

While the driver in Volume 239's Need for Speed Undercover screenshot hit a wall, readers certainly did not; check out some of the captions below. This month, we're going back (or possibly forward) in time. Turn on the time circuits and make sure the Flux Capacitor's fluxing, then send a caption to **screentest@nintendopower.com.**

THIS MONTH'S SHOT

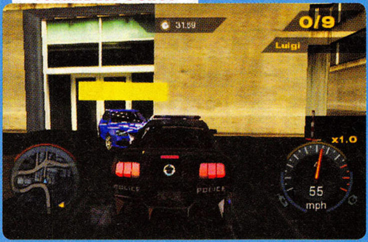


Robo: Heifer engines engaged!

While the need for fossil fuels has significantly decreased in the future, the whole world smells like manure.

HERE'S OUR CAPTION. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 239'S SHOT

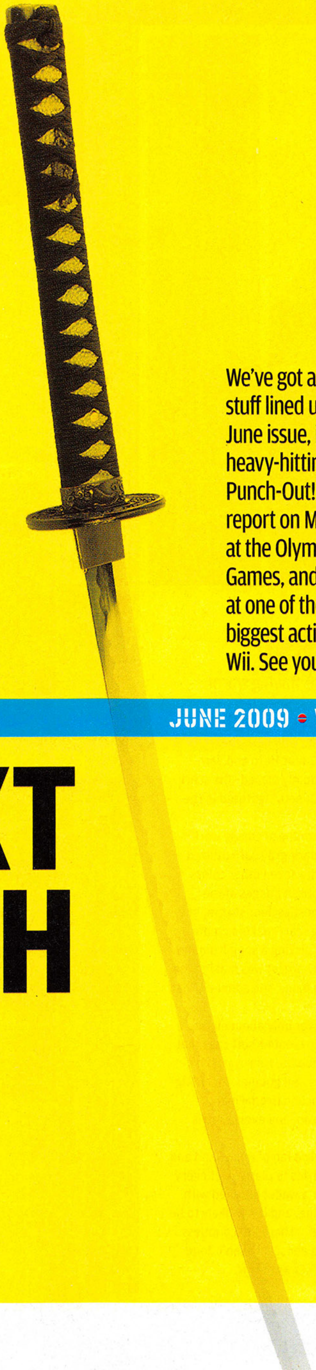


"Suspect is wearing green hat. Hold on, suspect just threw some mushrooms out the window...over." —**GEORGE R.**

"Despite all the hype, Grand Theft Auto: Mario Land just wasn't what the fans were hoping for." —**ANDREW B.**

"Before Bowser, Mario was a plumber. Luigi was a different story...." —**KIRT J.**

"Mario, you are under arrest for smuggling mushrooms out of the Mushroom Kingdom!" —**ADAM S.**



We've got a lot of great stuff lined up for the June issue, including a heavy-hitting review of Punch-Out!!, a special report on Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games, and a first look at one of the year's biggest action games for Wii. See you in 30!

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NEXT MONTH

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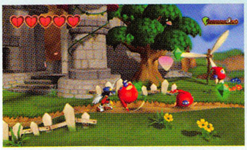

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